THEY WERE ALL PRISONERS

For one reason or another these ten characters were prisoners at some time in their lives. How many of them can you remember? Allow 5 points for each prisoner you can name, 5 for source, and another five for the author, making a maximum score of 150. The answers are on page 127.

1. *For fourteen years he was a forgotten man on an island prison in the Mediterranean, an innocent victim of a political plot and known only as No.* 34.

2. *Convicted of breach-of-promise and assessed £750 damages, this indignant gentleman spent three months in a debtors' prison rather than pay.*

3. *For killing his uncle during a quarrel this man spent the rest of his life in prison, escaping from it only in remarkably pleasant dreams.*

4. *Because he mistook a respectable milliner for a prostitute, this ardent young clergyman spent six months in jail for assault.*

5. *Imprisoned in her room, this mad woman escaped and tried to murder her husband in his bed.*

6. *When her husband ran off with her money and household goods, this young woman was thrown into Newgate for debt but finally escaped with the aid of a notorious highwayman.*

7. *Though confined within stone walls his mistress's visits gave him a rare sense of freedom.*

8. *The Lord Deputy imprisoned him for licentiousness, but his sister's pleas and the Deputy's fall from grace saved him.*

9. *In an attempt to rescue her sister, who has eaten forbidden fruit, she is captured by goblins.*

10. *Imprisoned by her jealous husband in her bridal chamber, she might be seen at her window until her death, when a bust was erected to her there.*

very seldom see any cakes. But, really, I seem to have been grown up ever since I can remember: I've not had any proper childhood at all, I mean. You see, my dear mother died when I was twelve." But Maisie could not go on. She sat bravely blinking back the tears from those big eyes that seemed to have grown very helpless and very serious, and bright, and appealing, and wistful, and so on.

"That's all right; that's all right," said Mr. Dickinson benevolently.

"It's so kind of you, Mr. Dickinson, to let me tell you all this."

"That's all right," said Mr. Dickinson. "Perhaps I am rather a lonely person myself."

"I say, Mr. Butler, the boss is a pretty rich man, isn't he?" said Maisie to Tazreel later on when Mr. Dickinson had gone off to his meeting.

"Yes'm, he sho is," replied that worthy, pretending to be a negro.

Maisie sat silent, thrilled. What a strange world it was, where a great big rich man could be lonely, just like her little insignificant self. It seemed incredible, too good to be true. She thought of the lion and the mouse.

Yet before a week had passed, Mr. Dickinson, as though the species had become mixed, was calling her "kitten."

In a fortnight they were engaged.

Tazreel, when he heard the news, retired to his room, and dashed his head several times against the wall. He was upset. Not being a fiend of foresight, he saw nothing in this arrangement but the prospect of two bosses instead of one. Besides, he was rather keen on her himself. He felt utterly broken, and determined to resign.

But as he approached the drawing room door, he heard Maisie say, in her high, clear, girlish voice, into which (so adaptable was she) there was already creeping a little of the authoritative tone inevitable to her future high position.

"Wilf, when we're wed there's just one teeny little change I want to make, apart from refurnishing and taking over the rest of the house."

"My little Maisy-waisy shall never ask twice," replied the impassioned Dickinson, "for anything that her Wilfywumkin can give her."

"I want you to have a proper staff of servants," said Maisie, "and shunt that tough looking batman of yours right off the premises. He looks at me in a way I don't like."

"I'll break every bone in his body," cried Mr. Dickinson warmly. "But yet, I think you must be mistaken, my dear. He

Coming back, the Old Man stopped dead on the top step of the ladder the moment he pinned a sharp black eye on Bull's so-called face.

"I believe you heard in the Coffee Club, Mr. Hobart, that recent gales had reopened the passage across Esperanza Bank?" he asked.

Anything said in the Coffee Club about pilotage you could tie to. They didn't even let a chief mate open his yap in there unless he had a master's licence. Though he was fresh in this part of the world, Captain Wyte knew that.

Bull Hobart dragged the edge of his foot across the bridge planking. "Not in the Coffee Club, sir," he groaned. "I met that blasted Linden just outside. He mentioned he'd heard you could carry three fathom right across the bank, same as before."

Jerome Linden was the captain who hadn't got the cargo. A good few shippers knew he shot sharp, not square.

Capt. Sturtevant Wyte straightened up even tauter. He took a turn right across the bridge, tap, tap, tap, tap. Sweat drops off Bull's face matched the fall of the Old Man's feet.

"Captain Linden," Wyte said. "Ah, yes. He would know."

It's following the shortest line between port and port that makes the difference between getting by and going broke.

The competition was tough as a sailorman's neck. From Miami to Port of Spain, steamship lines were beginning to skim the cream again. Cheaply run schooners grabbed the small stuff. Wyte and Linden were trying it in between.

Quietly the Old Man picked up his glasses from the box under the bridge-rail and glued them on a speck astern. It was Linden's *Grouper*. Pushing no water. Just waiting.

Captain Wyte nodded his lined mahogany head. "Ah, yes, Captain Linden," he repeated gently. "Well, Mr. Hobart, let us not despair. Good may come of this yet."

Bull Hobart's jaw dropped another inch in surprise. "We can easy get her off, sir," he said. "She took it like you'd lay down a baby."

Captain Wyte blinked. Down on deck, eardrums were bulging to tune in anything he let go. A master-owner is this way; either he's mostly a seaman and apt to lose his ship to the land sharks, or he's mostly a landsman and apt to lose his ship to the sea. The crew hadn't figured out which kind Wyte was.

It almost seemed as if the Old Man knew his reputation and future here were at stake. For a full minute he meditated. Then he blew down the tube. "Kindly fill your tanks, Mr. MacGregor," he said. "I want to hold her in position."

He sent the second mate off with the work boat to sound all

penetrating gaze, on the threshold of a sun-bathing establishment or night club, his sinister bodyguard would jerk a suggestive thumb at some particularly shameless sylph, or piquante dancer on the table, and twitch, meanwhile, the corner of his mouth violently towards his eye. A stern rebuke would immediately bring him to his senses.

He went to great trouble to introduce Mr. Dickinson into the society of millionaires, that he might become covetous and misappropriate the subscriptions that poured in. His master, returning from a Babylonic week end, told him that he had arranged a slapstick part for him on the films, the salary of which was commensurate with the incredible sufferings and exertions required.

He introduced a vile book into the covers of Mr. Dickinson's *Black Sheep Turned White*. Mr. Dickinson told him to glance through each new novel that came out, and to bring to him anything similarly deserving of his public censure.

The fiend, hoping to scare him into a murderous panic, sent him letters, apparently signed by a prominent fellow committeeman, and declaring that he (the fiend) was in reality a notorious dancer, named Lola de Montmorency, who had disappeared in unsavoury circumstances some time ago, now masquerading in male attire. Exposure was threatened. "This must be the work of some practical joker," said Mr. Dickinson, glancing gravely at the super-masculine countenance of his unattractive factotum.

That worthy then tried to persuade him to enter politics. Mr. Dickinson pointed out that politicians were frequently compelled to tell lies.

He described, in glowing terms, the pleasures of eastern monarchs. His master cut down his diet.

He earnestly sought the good man to consider enlarging his influence by becoming King Wilfrid I. Mr. Dickinson pondered the matter carefully, sighed, and said he feared the throne could hardly become his by immaculate means. However, he instructed the fiend to put in his spare time speaking at street corners on the off chance of bringing about a bloodless revolution.

The fiend, then, as if he had become raving mad, staggered in with baskets of jewels which he said he had found; raised up Helen, Cleopatra, and all that lot; discoursed on witchcraft; transported the good man to tops of mountains overlooking fine landscapes; sat up in adjacent flats during his two hours' rest; pinching the babies to make them cry; tried to scrape up an acquaintance for his master among artists; wrote "Arise, Dickinson, first Emperor of the World!" in phosphorous on his ceiling, and finally introduced him to Mrs. Walker. All was of no avail.

Poor Tazreel grew as lean as a cat. He no longer took light

hearted kicks at stones that lay in his path; he no longer sang at his scrubbing and sweeping. He was a victim of overwork, nervous depression, insomnia, fits of giddiness, spots before the eyes, backache, bile, utter fatigue.

One day, as he was polishing Mr. Dickinson's brass plate on the front railings, a party of happier fiends passed by who were doing themselves well at the Dorchester, from which they were organizing a mass temptation of the Y.M.C.A. They saw Tazreel, and gave each other the nudge. Peals of laughter floated back from this party of well fed, easy living, successful executives, and seared the taut nerves of the poor plodding failure on the steps.

The fiend, hysterical with rage, rushed upstairs and broke the waxen trophy in the bedroom.

"You clumsy fool," said Mr. Dickinson, entering upon the crash. "However, I forgive you. I'll get a stenographer. Your spelling is atrocious," he added, "your typing is slow, your shorthand non-existent. It will give you time to get a weight lifting job at one of the halls."

Tazreel, at this last sentence, uttered a bitter cry. He felt the system was blind, corrupt, utterly rotten, that allowed a man to mislead a poor fiend into the hope of an hour or two's leisure, and then to sentence him to new toils, without incurring immediate and eternal damnation. He began to feel that he never would be able to entrap Mr. Dickinson. There was no one to encourage him, no one to advise, to sympathize, to care. That night the poor fellow cried himself to sleep.

Two days later Maisie Williams sat at the old fashioned typewriter near the big roll-top desk. She was just a mere slip of a thing, with big, almost frightened blue eyes that darkened nearly to black in moments of excitement. Maisie had had a hard time. She was alone in the world, and the manager at her last place had been a beast. It was with a sigh of real thankfulness that she sank into the pleasant atmosphere of the little library in Park Lane, where a restful sense of luxury and beauty, for which her starved soul craved, filled the air, and her employer seemed a regular simp.

That day Mr. Dickinson dictated an unusual number of letters. Tea was served in the oak panelled, book lined room. Maisie could not repress a tiny girlish squeal of delight when she saw the delicious *petits fours* which accompanied the fragrant teapot.

"What a child you are!" said Mr. Dickinson kindly. "To squeal like that over a few cakes. My, what a noise you'd make if someone offered you a pearl necklace! It would be deafening."

"Not if it was a relation or a fiancé," said Maisie simply. "But you must not think me a child, Mr. Dickinson, for the fact is, I

SLANT ON THE SKIPPER

Exactly over the shoal was pencilled a neat little cross

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

WHEN the *Ellen* took the ground on Esperanza Bank, Capt. Sturtevant Wyte jumped ten feet, like an elderly gazelle. He rang down his engines before Bull Hobart, the mate, could stretch out his arm. The water on that bank was like grey milk. Not the kind where you could send a man aloft to conn the ship by the colour. The last cast of the lead had given four fathoms, double what the *Ellen* was drawing. She hadn't hit hard or touched coral, but she was dead under your feet.

For an instant Captain Wyte stood by the engine telegraph, thinner than usual and stiff enough to snap off. He stared ahead at the range he'd been following across the shoals, the top of Three Toes against Barracuda Rock. He glanced at his watch and then skittered down the ladder to the chartroom for a look at the barometer.

A choppy little sea was hissing across the banks under the drive of the usual northeasterly trade wind. It kept the water roiled.

Aft, Mr. MacGregor, the chief engineer, still mostly asleep, heaved his six-foot length out of a deck chair under the fluttering awning and slouched below to take over the mill.

The rest of the crew manœuvred to watch the Old Man. A little jam is handy sometimes if you want to see your captain operate. When you step aboard a ship you're handing the skipper your neck on a platter, and Sturtevant Wyte was new to this bunch. All they had on him was he got pneumonia too often up on the North Atlantic, had enough cash and credit back of him to buy the *Ellen* and had picked up a good hunk of cargo in a port where another shipmaster hadn't.

On the bridge, Bull Hobart, the mate, had dropped his jaw to half-mast, which didn't make him any handsomer.

Even when he was happy, Bull looked as though a reject from a correspondence course in sculpturing had hacked him out of a lopsided piece of granite. And now he wasn't happy. He crashed his fists together and swallowed down some of the briskest language in the West Indies.

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Scent of Pine

PINE bough, pine bark,
Cone and yellow wood,
Drenched with forest fragrances
Found in solitude;
Filled with summer breezes,
Song of bird and bee:
As you burn upon my hearth
Give them back to me.

Give me thunder of the surf
Sounding on your shore:
Give me whisper of the fog—
Give me this and more:
Drip of rain from off your boughs:
Gold of summer sun,
Give me peace of summer dusk
When the day is done.

Pine bough, pine bark,
Yellow wood and cone,
Send your tongues of tangled flame
High against my stone.
Let me listen as I dream,
Knowing that I hear
All the sounds the pine has heard
Listening through the year.

HARRY NOYES PRATT

SAPPHO

A vurry, vurry naughty lady

by A. C. MALCOLM

"*ESTOY mojado!*" I agreed. It was beyond doubt that the newcomer was wet. Wetter than the sodden cushions on which I huddled from the intermittent shower that dripped from the porous compartment roof; wetter than the half starved chickens whose glum reflections pecked back at them from the puddles of the wayside halt; as drenched as the humped Cantabrian mountains that the storm now hid and then again revealed through swirling curtains of steel. He was the wettest man I had ever seen. And the biggest.

"*Estoy un poco mojado,*" he grinned again in masterly understatement and hove his dripping bulk into the carriage. I pulled my luggage aside and made him a place in the communal morass, as the train jerked off on another stage of its inefficient progress to León. The shock of it threw him over bodily onto the seat and miniature Niagaras coursed from every fold of him.

He had spoken in Spanish, but he was rugged and blond and friendly. British, I guessed, noting the clean lines of mouth and jaw.

It transpired that I was right.

"That's fortunate for me!" he announced expansively when he learned that I was English. "Two solid months and not a devil to talk to but my Spanish secretary. Poor little Pedro! He's on the footplate now, trying to dry off. Scared stiff o' pneumonia." He laughed again. "Gosh! What a country. Goddam frizzling scorching sun, or—this." He waved a vast hand. "And priests. Rain or shine, there's priests. Sir, let me tell you in this mediæval land you've got to keep in with the church."

"Indeed?" I asked politely. "I'm new to Spain."

"Then you're lucky," he said, "to have me to tell you. *I* had to learn it the hard way. But I suppose things come differently to different people. Did you ever hear of a place called Villamuelas, over in the western sierras? No? That doesn't surprise me at all. The usual Spanish village. Dogs, dust and smells: square full of potholes: three miserable wineshops and a broken down

barn of a church. I had a bit of a coal mine there—once. I'm engineer and surveyor, y'see."

He paused to gaze disapprovingly through the rain-spattered windows and comment in good round language on the dubious progress of the train. "Hell," he said at length and turned his back on the slowly passing landscape. "Give me the Cheltenham Flier. But I was telling you."

He settled himself hugely on the seat and I prepared obediently to listen.

"Yes," he was saying, "I had a little mine all of my own. Prospected and found it myself before ever the big de Luna combine heard of it. They never thought to look for coal up there, y'see: but there it lay, close to the surface, easy worked and as good steam coal as ever came out of Wales. I got my concession, fixed a contract with the railway people, won some second-hand machinery and started in good and lively. Labour wasn't difficult; there were able-bodied men round Villamuelas. Yes, I reckoned I was on the way to being a small edition of Rockefeller. I was green then, y'see, and I'd a lot to learn."

"What was your trouble?"

"*Fiesta*. Every other day was *fiesta*, and not a hand's turn would any man do. If it wasn't St. Maximus it was St. Minimus; and if it wasn't St. Minimus it was St. Somebody Else and The Eleven Thousand Virgins. It got so bad I decided some holy saint had got himself martyred every day of the year entirely to give my men an excuse to sodden good muscles away. It was crazy.

"I said as much to the priest of the place. 'Father,' I said to him one fine day over what I hoped was a tactful drink in the best *fonda* on the market square. 'Here am I, a struggling prospector, laying out money and skill on a scheme that'll bring prosperity to Villamuelas such as she's never known, and your infernal parishioners won't work. Look at 'em now!'

"His palms splayed out like fat pink steaks of salmon. He was an unctuous bird, that priest.

"'Señor,' he bleated, 'today is the festival of the blessed St. Tinpot.' (I forget the name of the saint who'd taken the shift for the twenty-four hours). 'Today is his festival and the people make *fiesta*. It is fitting, Señor Gilligan,' he pronounced, returning to his wine.

"'But surely to goodness,' I argued with him, 'if it's all that much of a holy day, why don't they go to church?'

"'Señor,' he protested, 'that they cannot do. You can see for yourself our church roof is in holes and I have not even a bell to call the people to prayer. We are a very poor village, Señor Gilligan. Perhaps you had not realized.'

" Well, I saw it then, as I ought to have seen it before ; and it was this way. That priest was the only man-jack in the district who wasn't directly profiting out of the mine, and it rankled. He'd got round the villagers and used his influence to engineer a sort of celestial strike, and now he was out to profit all he could.

" It was plain the thing was going to take some handling.

" We walked across to the church, and it was as he said. The walls were cracked ; tiles were missing from the roof ; and the bell-turret at the gable end stood empty to the winds of heaven. It set me thinking of a nice old ship's bell I'd seen in a chandler's in Bilbao. I judged it'd be about the size.

" ' You see, Señor ? ' he repeated.

" I saw, and I made up my mind.

" ' Father,' I said, ' I'll tell you what I'll do. If you'll tell your flock that St. This and St. That'll be far more beatified to look down from paradise and see 'em doing an honest day's work in the mine, I'll put up enough cash to repair your roof, and over and above that I'll do my best to get you a bell.'

" ' Señor,' grins he, frisky as a dog with two tails, ' that is a most generous offer.'

" It's no offer, Father,' I warned him, ' it's a stonecold bargain. Now go and tell your parishioners to get moving.'

" If I'd wanted proof of the power of the church, by Jove, I had it then. One moment the whole village were lounging about spitting orange pips : the next they were scattering hither and yon, mobilizing builder's gear. As soon as I'd seen the work well in hand I wired to Bilbao, and hoped as hard as a hermit that the bell hadn't since been sold. I was lucky. It was duly unloaded at the station all neatly tied with string and wrapped in hessian. I had it slung up to Villamuelas between a couple of mules and held a formal presentation in the middle of the square.

" It was a first-class show. I made a speech and the priest made a speech ; and then everyone crowded round to watch me unwrap the bell. She was a beauty. Full sweeping curves and a mouth like a bull of Bashan with a beautiful band of strapwork running round the rim. She needed cleaning, but I put a man on to her with spirit and sand and in no time at all she was fit to dazzle a queen.

" ' Señor,' says the priest, smiling across the bell at me. ' We are all most grateful. It is a most beautiful bell. But,' he goes on, suddenly bending down, ' what is this name written here ? '

" I went round to where he was standing. I hadn't known there was lettering. It would be the ship's name of course, but that wouldn't matter. Or so I thought, but when I stooped down to read it my heart gave a double thump ; for the name on the bell

was—SAPPHO; and though I'm no scholar I certainly remembered hearing somewhere that Sappho was a vurry naughty lady. Did you know that?"

I nodded. "She was a famous poetess of Lesbos, twenty-six centuries ago: and I should assess your description as very correct."

"I thank you. So there was I, in a jam, for if that priest knew who and what Sappho was, well it stood to reason he'd never consider having the bell on his church, not even if the ship that bore her name had been famous throughout the seven seas.

"Then for a second time he asked me to explain, and I realized he didn't know.

"'The name?' I answered casually, but thinking very hard. 'Oh! That's the name of the saint the bell was dedicated to.'

"'Saint!' he frowned. 'I never heard of any St. Sappho.' And to my horror he pulled out a little black book and started thumbing it through. 'I've a list here,' he said, 'of all the saints in the calendar, and there isn't any Sappho amongst them.'

"'Then it's a pity,' I told him, for by now I'd recovered my nerve, 'that you're not a better educated man, or you'd know that Sappho was a Greek saint with a list of miracles that'd stretch from here to Rome. It's an honour to you to have her bell on your church and the best thing yet for your village.'

"It worked. Not only did he swallow my tale but he broadcast it to the village with embellishments, and by the time Sappho was hoisted up into her turret she was all the saints rolled into one. It goes without saying that they rang her at once, and a fine melodious tone she had. Morning and afternoon her voice came stealing over the fields, and in the evenings the priest and I would sit together over our wine and watch the glistening curves of her as she tilted to and fro in her turret pealing out against the stars. For morning, noon and night there was always somebody ready and willing to ring Sappho.

"And work was going on, real work for once. The priest kept his part of the bargain and those Spaniards laboured. There were a few *fiestas* now and then, of course, but I raised no objection. I'd learned my lesson: live and let live. So everybody prospered.

"Until one day, when the priest and I were sitting having our usual, for it happened to be *fiesta*, a big chauffeur-driven car, white all over with dust, bumped into Villamuelas, and a gaunt leathery man in an alpaca suit came striding from it across the square. He'd a black cheroot jutting from under a royal eagle's nose, thin sallow cheeks and eyes that were hard and calculating. I'd a fancy I'd seen some such face in the papers, but for the moment I couldn't place him.

"Then, '*Dios mio!*' the priest exclaimed. 'What brings Don Ramon de Luna to Villamuelas?'

"If it wasn't clear to him it was clear enough to me. News of me had filtered through to the combine and here was de Luna himself to investigate. No doubt he considered it a flaming insult that anyone but himself should start up a mine in Spain, least of all a raw whippersnapper such as I was then.

"He held out a hand to the priest, then looked me up and down. 'Señor Gilligan?' he asked coldly. The priest introduced us. I was the only thing in Villamuelas that looked like an Englishman, anyway.

"'Yes,' babbles my friend. 'You two will be interested to meet. It is the señor here who has started the Villamuelas mine. He has been most kind to all of us, especially to the church. He has given us badly needed funds and also that most beautiful bell.'

"'Ah!' snaps de Luna, giving me a pretty chilly handshake. 'It is seldom that commercial men interest themselves in the church. A bell indeed!'

"'Yes,' enthuses my friend. 'A bell dedicated to St. Sappho. A marvellous Greek saint, Señor Gilligan has explained to me, famed for her numerous miracles.'

"'*Sappho?*' growls de Luna, throwing the cheroot on the ground and grinding it with his heel. '*Miracles?* Of what is Señor Gilligan thinking?' He wheeled on me. 'How came you to invent this St. Sappho?'

"'But,' stammers the priest, 'the name is on the bell. There must be a St. Sappho.'

"'Not in all the company of heaven. If you weren't a thoroughly uneducated man you'd know that Sappho was a love-poetess and the most scandalous of her sex. You have been the victims of an execrable joke. *Señor Gilligan!*' I gave him back look for look. 'I came here to ask you to show me your mine. I would now prefer to make the visit unaccompanied. You will please arrange it.' Then he strode towards his car.

"What was there I could do? The blow had fallen and I cursed myself for my folly. Long before de Luna got back from the mine the bell turret was empty and the priest was standing before a crowd of angry villagers reading a comminatory service over the splintered fragments of Sappho.

"'Señor,' he told me, shutting his bible with a snap, 'you will leave Villamuelas tomorrow.'

"I tried to argue with him, but he wouldn't have it. I protested I couldn't leave my work. To that he answered blandly; 'Tomorrow we make *fiesta* for the blessed St. Nicholas. After

that it will be *fiesta* for many many days.' It was the end, and I knew it.

"I cleared things up as well as I could, left Villamuelas and negotiated with de Luna by letter from Madrid. I had no particular hopes, for the thing was a foregone conclusion, but I bargained as well as I could. In the end I sold him the mine for as much as I paid for the concession, plus very nearly the cost of the works: and I shook the dust of Spain from my feet and came to Paris.

"And there . . ."—a flicker of amusement crossed his face—"something very curious happened. You know the Paris *quais* where the booksellers are? I was passing there one day when a book caught my eye. It was a Spanish translation of a thing by a man called Daudet, and the title was . . . *Sappho*. Sir, if that book was to be believed, Sappho was certainly a vurry, vurry naughty lady. I tell you the devil was in me that day. I bought that book and I did it up and sealed it with seven seals and I mailed it off to the parish priest of Villamuelas with my compliments. Months afterwards I got a letter."

"The supreme malediction?"

"So you'd think, but listen." Mr. Gilligan fixed his eyes on space and quoted slowly from memory.

"*Thank you most heartily for your very kind gift which has greatly helped to relieve the tedium of the long winter evenings. Please send me all the works of this admirable author.*

"To which I countered with just one line. *Enough*, I wrote, *is as good as a fiesta*. And that" said Mr. Gilligan with a wry smile at me, "was the last I ever heard of Villamuelas."

The train had rumbled to a halt again at nowhere in particular, and a depressed and more than ordinarily moist young man was picking his way along the track towards us. Mr. Gilligan threw open the carriage door and urgently waved.

"Pedro! You come from the hub of things; to wit the so-called engine of this so-called train. What's the chance of our arriving in León?"

The secretary lifted his thin shoulders and regarded us with a profound resignation.

"Señores," he sighed, "it will be a very long time before we reach León. It is the atrocious coal we have on board that will not make a proper fire. It is coal from a mine at Villamuelas, one of the de Luna properties. For some time, the driver tells me, the coal from that mine was excellent; but now they strike ever worse seams. It is a most extraordinary thing, the driver says," continued the disconsolate Pedro, oblivious of the glorious light that dawned in Mr. Gilligan's eye. "It is the only time that Don Ramon de Luna has ever been wrong about a mine."

OPERATION BADGER

The massed black battalions began to march out through the city gates

by FRANK S. STUART

THE badger, prowling almost noiselessly through the wood at dusk, was starving. Only the insatiable craving of his belly, making his daytime sleep faint and nightmarish, had dragged him out thus while the frightening daylight remained.

Ten feet above him, clasping the tip of a hazel wand and swinging happily there in the last level rays of sunlight, a bee stared down. Its five eyes, like black opals, observed the badger stonily. Two of these eyes were informed by six thousand lenses each—where the human eye has but one. In these lenses, twelve thousand midget badgers glimmered on fields of jet.

Apprehension and anger suddenly stirred this little, exquisite pellet of living dust poised between earth and heaven. The eyes did not change; the bee had never, until then, known anything but fun and happiness and love and warmth, and this venomous stirring boded ill. The bee had never seen a badger before; nor had its ancestors for several generations. Yet some race memory, reaching down the centuries to preserve the species, tensed the air of the woodland glade until it was brittle with hatred.

The badger's bulk, bigger by many times than the whole city where the bee lived, moved slowly, snuffing the moist earth patiently and remorselessly. It was seeking something. Something dimly gathered from the past—a memory of keen sweetness that caused a trickle of saliva to run from the leathern jaws.

The bee shot into the air, its wings beating more than sixteen thousand times a minute, and sped at twenty miles an hour towards the hollow oak beside a stream where its race had lived so long as race memory ran. Alighting about a foot up the scarred trunk, it paused on the brink of the hole that gave access to the bees' city within, and its outstretched wings shivered. Several bee sentries, who examined every entering bee of the hundred thousand who used the place, darted at the intruder before recognizing by smell that this was one of the inhabitants. In the same time, a stranger would have been dismembered.

The entering bee swung up its antennæ in warning. The

sentries poised, their wings stiffening fiercely on their shoulders at the signal. They set up a whining drone ; and instantly hundreds of reserve fighters poured out of the waxen fortifications about the gateway, and ran bristling about the pale, following each other in single file, and staring about the universe with challenging eyes. They, too, took up the bitter droning. The noise spread, shrilling about inside the oak trunk, which thrummed like an organ pipe.

Bees happily floating in from the fields suddenly pitched their loads of honey or pollen anyhow into the cells of combs just inside the city gateway, always kept empty for such an emergency, and spun round to jostle into place among the ranks of bees already forming regiments just inside the fortifications of the gates. To the bees, this yellow masonry they had built was massive and gigantic, impenetrable as the Maginot Line. Masses of bees who had been about to make for the clover fields stopped headlong, turned, and stepped into fighting positions. The tremendous, happy commotion of the bee colony stilled into a fatal calm.

The Queen, surrounded by the maids who fed and brushed her, walked with dignity to a crevice in the very heart of the tree ; and a dozen hairless, formidable fighters closed the line of her retreat. Squads of young bee nurses took over entire charge of the teeming nursery-combs, warming and tending the thousands of eggs, larvæ and nymphs, and gently assisting bees who were being born to break out of their sealed golden cradles. This released hundreds of older nurses to form amazonian battalions behind the storm-troops near the gateway ; and they turned from Life towards Death without even a regret. New-born bees, silvery with baby down, bolted what honey they needed, and formed up solidly before the Queen, so as to impose their soft young bodies between her and peril.

This mobilisation was for what ? None knew. All through the honey scented summer days, while the world throbbed and groaned beneath its burden of sin and pain and folly, this golden city had known nothing but ordered activity, happiness and fulfilment. Bees were born, took their joy-flight, became nurses, emerged into the drenched glory of the flower harvests, and died, never having felt or seen malice, unkindness or destruction. Those who believe that mankind is the highest form of life should think on these things.

Now, the city rang like a conch with living anger. Yet still the badger had not come into view from the tree. This creature of the night, walking by day, was thirty inches from snuffing snout to tail-tip. The black-striped " badge " on each side of his face was boldly prominent, the shoulders massive as those of a small bear. Like most badgers, he never hunted with his mate, though

sometimes she might be seen obediently trailing him several hundred yards behind. The lady badger knows her place.

This evening, however, he was alone and angry. He was facing famine, and was being pitilessly driven by it to attempt a thing he did not wish to face. He had raised a too successful family, and the cubs, now hunting on their own in this wood, had unreasonable hungers, and that irreverence to custom which marks the young. Therefore, they often came out before dusk; so that, when their parents ventured into the coolness of the night, the wood had been swept clean of food. The previous night, this badger had found only a few insects, and had spent his time morosely gnawing the roots of trees, and sullenly fermenting his resentment. Today, he had slept ill; tonight, he was starving.

He had known about the bees' city for a long time, and often sniffed epicurishly the sharp fragrance of new honey as he passed, at nights, near the faintly humming tree. He had never eaten honey, but some instinct from ancestors who had torn out such nests, or overturned beehives, and regaled themselves on succulent larvæ mashed in honey, told him that here was food, and warned him of something which made the hairs bristle along his spine and his iron jaws clamp together.

He shuffled into the dusky glade of the oak wood, and paused, facing the tree, sniffing noisily at the honey scent. The rank effluvium of his body caused the black cohorts of bees to bow their legs ready to spring, while their silver wings stuck out transfixed. One of the sentries hurtled into the air, and dropped back on the landing stage, whereat the hundreds crouching there thrust forth the needle points of quivering stings.

A sudden quaver touched the whining symphony rising from the massed black regiments, and they began to march out through the city gates, orderly as Zulu impis, till they covered, perhaps within thirty seconds, the entire alighting ground outside. One pouring column doubled round to the back of the trunk to take up ambush positions. Others hurried above the gateway, ready to powerdive down and intercept the now impending attack. The sentries directed the fanning columns by quick jerks of head or wing. While the badger raised one paw, thirty thousand picked troops took up battle stations.

The badger's grey fur was lifting on back and flanks. He stood motionless, regarding the tree and its crawling, singing armies. To the bees, it was as it would seem to a city of men if a creature ten thousand times the size of man, looming far over the top of the highest skyscraper building, awful as a walking mountain, approached with destructive and intelligent intent.

Swerving suddenly like a monster crab, the badger rolled into

the contest. The wings of the first sentry into the attack screamed shrilly like the whistle of an officer leading assault troops. Before the badger had set down his foot to commence the attack that should burst open this peaceful city, two thousand bee commandos had flung themselves into the blind depths of his stinking fur, and were roaring with rage because they could not dive deep enough through the blinding tangles to find a surface into which to jet the venom that seemed to be bursting from their burning bodies.

Each bee felt herself expanding illimitably like a balloon of acid being pumped fuller and fuller. Consciousness of unprovoked attack on a community perfectly peaceful and good made each one as terrible as a Valkyrie. With wings, abdomens, heads, legs and extruded stings, they scrambled and shoved and tore and bit their way deeper and deeper, treading each other's bodies, whining so that the air all round the badger seemed horribly to vibrate on a higher and higher intolerable note.

His head, where the hair was short, was so encrusted with struggling bees that it looked as if he had plunged into a bog of bubbling slime. This coating crawled bodily in the dying light like a disintegrating mask, and fumbled with horrible, avid little feelers at his tightly-clamped eyelids, and panted with starving hate to force a way through the bunched fur into the tendrils of his inner ears, and plucked and scratched and scrabbled at his iron lips, and fought one another like devils to crack off or bite through the stiff, cane-like hairs that guarded the red way up his nostrils into his brain.

The badger made a waddling run, stood up against the tree, clasping it unshakably in his short forepaws, and rubbed his chest angrily on the bark. Hundreds of shock troops stumbling on their bitter way through that jungle stench were immediately broken and squashed and torn to death, and others horribly injured; these latter stuck out their stings till some were ruptured, trying with hideous malice to touch some sensitive thing before they died.

Meanwhile, the badger was unappalled by the answer to his aggression—opposition only reddened the angry light in his brain and made him strive to destroy as well as feed. He opened and shut his jaws quicker than light, grasping in that steely vice the edge of the hole and sending a canine tooth bigger than twenty bees smashing through the trusted fortifications of the gateway, and grinding down a picked group of fighters lurking there. His horny lips emitted protruding teeth and then instantly drew tight like tense, coarse leather, protecting the rest of his mouth, while he snorted continually down flaring nostrils to try to blow out bees which were packing there now, killing each other eagerly and dying mute and unresistant so as to form a pulp that might suffocate the

badger by choking his air passages.

But he had his grip on the edge of the hole, and now steadily drew back his head. The most frightful sound the bees had ever heard rent through the oak, as a great wedge of rotten wood splintered bodily away. The golden walls of the city inside were sundered, and freezing evening air poured like the breath of Death into the ragged cavity, where whole streets had suddenly fractured away and vanished, leaving the torn white half-bodies of larvæ drowned in a tidal wave of honey that poured from broken cells.

Yet the faith of the bees was not dimmed. Regiment after regiment of them took off in formation, pouring themselves like burning oil over the invader's head, into the stretched armpits where the leathery hide was thinner, into thickets of hair beneath which some hateful instinct told them were vital parts, or open scratches from accidents, between the cushions of his toes, into his stinking anus and hot abdomen and thighs, and ever more and more devilishly levering at the corners of his eyes and lips and nostrils, and in the hairy darkness within his ears. In those obstinate cracks that covered his eyes, some bees dragged at the upper lids and some at the lower, while others wedged their heads into the slits until their skulls burst, and others sat shuddering with effort, trying to pierce the crevices with needling stings.

The invader, covered with thirty or forty thousand bees, snuffed and struggled malevolently, fully accepting the challenge, trying to break open the city now from spite as well as hunger. He snuffed and struggled blindly, brushing his head with a formidable forepaw to smash hundreds of the defenders, wriggling his chest against the trunk, rubbing his cheeks on the bark, nosing his vast face into the hole and turning his nose from side to side so as to mash up street after golden street. To the bees, that blind face was like a giant's, as big as half the sky, as it sniffed about for a fresh grip on the rocking city, seeking to tear it bodily out into the open. Again, the badger's mouth clacked open and shut. It gripped and tore away an entire honeycomb. By some incalculable mercy, this snapped off; otherwise the whole waxen ball would have been rooted out with it.

But the attacker reeled suddenly back and to the ground, uttering a whining snarl of mortal agony.

In that second effort to obtain a fatal grip, he had admitted a dozen bees to his mouth before he could swish together the leathern curtains of his lips; his tongue, sweeping round, smashed every bee, but one, in dying, drove its sting like a poisoned dart upwards into that scarlet flail, and instantly deliberately dragged itself clear so that poison-bag and bowels should be torn out and leave every drop of venom there. The tongue's responsive tremor flattened

bee and bag together, which hosed every drop of poison into the wound; this increase in pain startled the badger into loosening, by the tiniest touch, the muscles bolting shut his eyelids—and before he could think, three stings had stabbed the pupil of his right eye.

With the comb still in his teeth, drowning masses of bee attackers as the honey poured from it, he staggered back a pace or two from the tree. The air round him shrilled with humming; above it rose a louder note as, through the hundreds circling him in the air, there smote a black thunderbolt column of bees from the ambush behind the trunk, just as he gulped the honeycomb whole.

In the twilight, it seemed as if the physical impact of the new attack hurled the badger backwards. Its weight was no more than that of a handful of dust—its fury like lightning. With honey running from both sides of his mouth, where drowned bees, dying, struck with their weapons beneath the yellow flood, he lumbered sideways into the stream. He vanished under water with a thick, swirling splash, pawing at his face to scrape off thick new bee clusters over both his eyes.

Thousands of bees were drowned, some washed down the river, spinning in helpless circles, unwilling to delay by climbing into the air, but madly struggling to swim upstream to return directly to the attack, others gasping out their lives under water where they refused to rise lest they miss a chance to pierce the skin while the draggled fur lay close to it. Cold, choking water killed them; rather than save themselves, they redoubled their attack so as to deter the aggressor from returning to their city.

But the badger meant to return. His kind, once roused, fight while bones and skin hang together. He knew that the water would rid him, at one chilling stroke, of all the finest bee troops. Then he would go back and tear out their city.

The stench of the attacker hung there still, and all awaited his sudden return, and worked feverishly to prepare to repel him again. Vicious flights of bee patrols passed in massed formation to and fro. Twenty thousand bees were dead, mostly drowned. A comb of brood, with three thousand eggs, larvæ and nymphs had been swallowed whole—a terrifying loss, since worker bees live only about eight weeks at that time of year, and must be continuously replaced. Several other combs were frightfully damaged. Pounds of honey had gone; yet to gather a single pound, bees must make combined flights totalling over fifty thousand miles, twice the distance round the earth, and four million blooms have to be visited.

Among the ruins marched great squads of rescue workers, builders, navvies, storehouse packers, engineers. The living were hauled from under the ruins or out of the honey rivers, the dead and wounded unceremoniously flung away. Bees levered huge

lumps of comb, damming the menacing honey floods with them.

Standing in the river, with only his snout showing, the badger snarled and bubbled, working himself up for a new and conclusive attack. His eyes were still shut, bees still struggled like cohorts of winged furies in that head fur which was above the water. His teeth stuck out savagely from his lips.

Even though the invader might return, the Queen dared wait no longer. Because of the fearful losses of eggs and young bees, she knew that, at whatever risk, not even one minute must now be wasted. With royal and fatal calm, she moved across the inner empty combs, and began to lay eggs in patches of cells as rapidly as she could move. Three thousand eggs every twenty-four hours would have to be her rate of reproduction now; to her, the whole disaster meant one thing—the cradles must be filled.

In this truce of leaden minutes, while the badger stood in the deep water, mobilising from the furthest confines of Hell a black anger to recommence his attack and finish off the city, the stealthy things of the wood suddenly and silently appeared around the scene of the combat, avid to gather what they might from the battlefield. Moths drifted like little ghosts above the legions of the dead, and observed from gem-like eyes the coiling trickles of sweet honey that they would have loved to taste—but for the screaming bee patrols that guarded it everywhere. Beetles glimmered greeny-black as they hastily shoved leaves aside in their progress towards broken bits of comb on the ground. Voles and shrews pattered in the dead leaves like fairies. Columns of marauding ants tried to make honeydrops on the ground their own, or manœuvred to seize fallen eggs. Even worms poked up blind heads and drew dying bees underground. And a viper slithered like a trickle of tarnished silver in the moonlight, picked up a few wounded bees, and observed the scene with cynical, indifferent eyes. The bee warriors gave him back stare for stare, and presently he slid away, not daring to challenge them further.

The badger chose his moment at last for the final assault. With a mighty founder, he ploughed through the water, gathering all his rage and pain within him to drive him in a last effort finally to sunder the bees' city. And then, at that moment, the air darkened as though a tiny cloud had fallen from the sky. This cloud was composed of bees. The vanguard was the remnant of the vast bee army that had flung itself so gallantly and selflessly into the first great battle of the defence. But behind them, outnumbering them, pouring in shimmering thousands upon thousands, came a pell-mell of nurse-bees, silver baby bees, ragged-winged old dying bees, navvies, ambulance-bees, even bees torn from the holy trance of comb-making.

This was the last forlorn hope, the throwing into the scales of Life and Death of everything the bees possessed except their sacred Queen. They did what they must; one more attack would have ended their city and them all.

The badger heard them coming. He paused, still as a statue, though bees rose and fell about him like black steam. Then he turned. His nerve broke. With a horrible little whimpering outcry, he bolted back into the river in such headlong panic that he fell over roots, slithered in mud, thrashed himself with brambles . . . remembering only one great scarlet warning, that he must not open his eyes where dying bees still worked to get at the pupils.

He crashed into, swam and crossed the stream, emerged far down, bolted up the bank, and vanished into the woods. One eye was almost blind. It would never see properly again, for the poisoned darts, dragged this way and that by his dirty, pitiful paw, had hopelessly scarred the lens. He crashed about in the woods, sometimes pausing, sometimes at full speed, all that night and until morning. By that time, the bees in his fur had died or gone. But their city, damaged and decimated, was saved.

The badger was very hungry and sorrowful. Things looked blurred, and he did not understand. Blindly, he headed for a place all the wood things knew, and which they desperately avoided except in extremes of fear or sorrow. It was a thicket of silent undergrowth, horribly luxuriant, and round it, at broken intervals like the last monoliths of a Stone Circle, were a few ageless oaks. The lascivious fecundity of nettles round these dying stumps gave the place an unearthly look.

At the edge of the circle, the badger paused, his breath coming in tiny, sobbing grunts. He seemed to be listening for some sound infinitely distant and piercingly sweet. Perhaps he was sorry for that attack of his, that had cost him so dear. Or was he sorry only that it had failed?

Suddenly, the hair rose all along his back, his legs bowed, his belly touched the dead leaves. He slunk into the very centre of the circle, like a dog that has done wrong, and there he nuzzled with his white face among the oak-mast's pregnant dampness.

The first stains of dawn silently lightened the wood, the first birds piped waveringly, and a breath, passing through the oak circle, tenderly smoothed the hackles of fur ruffling that crouching back. The badger shivered, and quaveringly got on his legs again. He set off slowly and wearily towards his burrow and his mate.

He still saw blurred images where they had been clear before. But now he could not remember that they had ever been clear. The sorrow and the terror had gone.

For Pan still lives.

A GIRL CALLED MYRNA

She unconsciously classified him : Seventeen

by PEGGY MANN

SHE was conscious always of her beauty, conscious, too, of the effect that it had upon others. Perhaps that was why she smiled at the boy as she passed him on her way to the dining room. His eyebrows had gone up slightly when he first saw her. And she was pleased.

As she followed the head waiter to her table, she glanced briefly over her shoulder. The boy was staring after her. He was tall, slender, sensitive-looking, with soft, curly hair. The kind of hair that is nice to touch. His eyes were large, deep-set and dark, and his age came shining from his eyes. She unconsciously classified him : Seventeen.

The waiter held her chair, and she sat gracefully, aware that the man at the next table was staring at her. Her glance flickered over him, too. A handsome man. With a moustache. Twenty-six.

She often placed people at twenty-six, conscious of that year because she was twenty-six, and because, unlike most women of beauty, she looked her age, or more. She had lived her years fast and fully, wearing them almost thin. Each departing year had touched her face slightly, never marring the perfection of her features, but leaving its subtle record behind in her smile, in her skin, in her eyes.

She watched amused as the young man's glances travelled to her left hand. It was almost automatic. First the quick realization of her face, her figure. Then the swift glance to her left hand. There was no ring on her left hand. She smiled, more to herself than to the young man, but he, encouraged, nodded at her in a friendly fashion. She picked up her menu then with a breath of a bored sigh and gave her order to the waiter . . .

After dinner she did not wander absently into the lounge, as most unmarried young women do. Instead she went straight to the boy. He was sitting talking to a pretty young girl, but he rose quickly to ask, " Can I help you ? "

" Is there a side door in the hotel which opens on the beach ? "

He led her to the door and she walked out on to the sand. Then she looked back. He was watching her.

She stepped out of her sandals and ran across the damp sand down to the water. She stood there, imagining the picture she made, alone on the beach in the moonlight. She watched the bright streamer from the lighthouse wipe across the sky, again and again and again.

And then someone behind her said, " Beautiful night, isn't it ? "

She turned. It was the young man with the moustache. He smiled at her pleasantly.

" Yes," she said, " it's a nice night." She walked on down the beach.

She heard the sand crunch as he followed behind her for a bit. Then he stopped. She heard the sand crunch again, as he turned and walked back to the hotel.

When he was quite gone she looked again towards the door of the hotel. The boy was still standing there, silhouetted in the bright oblong of light. She walked slowly towards him.

When she reached the door, he moved aside to let her pass.

" No," she told him, her voice as soft as the slow slap of the water upon the sand, " I don't want to go in just yet."

He moved out from the lighted doorway on to the beach. " Thought I'd like a breath of fresh air," he explained shyly, looking at his shoes.

She put her hands behind her head and breathed deep of the clean, salty wind which swept in from the sea. " Yes," she said, " it's wonderful out here."

She saw that he was no longer looking at his shoes. She was pleased.

They walked on down the beach together. As they went farther from the hotel he grew more easy.

He was having a holiday before going up to Cambridge, he told her. She thought that was very nice. He was going to read English, not very practical, but it was what he liked best, and he thought that whenever possible one should do what one liked best. She thought that was nice, too. She liked the earnestness in his voice when he spoke.

When they turned to go back she said, " I was thinking of going prawning tomorrow. Could you tell me how to go about it ? "

" Well," he began, " you must wait till the tide is right out. Then if you go over to the flats beyond the breakwater, and— and—"

She was looking at him wide-eyed, interested, intent. And he faltered.

" Yes ? " She enjoyed his confusion.

He went on explaining earnestly about the type of net to take. But when they were almost to the hotel, she interrupted him. " It

sounds very complicated," she said simply. "Perhaps you could come with me and show me how to do it."

She watched his eyes widen just a bit. "Oh, yes. Yes, rather," he said, unable to keep tones of enthusiasm from his voice. "In fact, I hadn't anything fixed tomorrow. I'd be very glad to show you."

"All right. I'll meet you out at the breakwater at eleven." She moved towards the door of the hotel, then turned. "By the way, what's your name?"

"Peter. Peter Williams."

"My name is Myrna." She watched him a moment, drinking in his state. She smiled. Then she walked on ahead of him into the hotel . . .

He was sitting on a rock on the breakwater, when she came up the next day. He wore bathing trunks, and she watched him a moment as he sat, staring into the sea. She liked the lithe brownness of his body. Then she ran across the rocks towards him.

He looked up quickly, and smiled. "Hello. I didn't think you were coming."

"I wouldn't miss this for anything." She caught up the tin bucket he had brought. "Will we catch enough prawns to fill this?"

"We ought to." He stood up, proud and sure somehow, even while he was humble and rather uncertain next to her. "I know the best places to fish for them. Come on."

He helped her down the rocks, and led her along a thin stream which twisted through the sand and tall marsh grasses. Then stream and sand ended. The grasses thickened. They pricked her bare feet. He was walking on ahead of her, steady and sure, the sunlight shining coppery on his brown bare back.

"Peter," she called to him, a little plaintively, like a child, "Peter, this stubble hurts my feet."

"We'll be there soon." He walked on.

She was not used to this disregard from men, and she enjoyed it. Then the ground became muddy. Suddenly, a crab scuttled sideways near her feet, and she screamed.

He turned and ran back to her.

"Oh, Peter, this is a terrible place. Crabs and mud. Is it much farther?"

He was looking at her as she stood before him in her white bathing suit. He said nothing.

"Is it much farther, Peter?"

He flushed suddenly and said, "Would you like me to carry you?"

"I've been thinking of that." She knew then he had been

thinking of that, too, and that he was afraid. "Yes, carry me."

He directed her to jump on his back, and with his hands under her thighs and her arms about his neck, he carried her through the grassy marshes. They came to a shallow arm of the sea stretching inward. He could have set her down. But he did not. He carried her till they came to a sweep of clean white sand.

"Last stop," he said.

"Well, that was a nice ride." She laughed as she slid from his back and felt happy in the warm morning sunlight.

But with him there seemed to be something dark inside. His eyes rested on her. She smiled at him. But he scowled a little, shook his head slightly, almost unconsciously, and took up the net he had brought. She understood the darkness in him. She had brought it there. And she was pleased.

"It's—it's awfully alone out here on the flats, isn't it, Peter?" she said.

He dug the net handle savagely deep in the sand and said nothing.

"What's the matter, Peter? You're not angry with me?"

"No, of course not."

He waded out into the sea with the net and she followed him.

"Oh, look!" She bent to look in the net, and as she bent she felt his eyes upon her. "I'm having a wonderful time," she told him. "Come on, let's find some more."

After a while, as she chatted on easily, he grew more talkative, too. He told her about school. He had passed higher certificate before leaving last term. And he told her about his father, who had wanted him to go into the Navy. But he would never be a sailor. He hated the sea and ships and the smell of oil. He hated the dreariness of the flats, the empty loneliness of the sand dunes. People like it for a holiday," he said, "because it's different. But me, I've known it all my life, and I hate it. I'm going away to Cambridge in the autumn, and I'm never coming back here."

Suddenly, out of nowhere, she asked, "Peter, who was that girl you were talking to last night when I passed?"

He stopped short, surprised. "That was Jill."

"She's a very pretty girl."

"Yes, she is rather. She's the daughter of Mr. Glasgow, the owner of these hotels."

"Do you like her, Peter?" she asked.

He had been bending over the net, and he straightened up. He looked at her and his eyes were sweet and serious. "I'm in love with her, I think."

She moved closer to him. "Why don't you call me by my name? I told you it is Myrna."

" Yes, but . . ."

" But what, Peter ? "

He looked at her. " Myrna." He said it slowly, like a child learning a new word, and the air between them seemed to vibrate. She was conscious of every tingling nerve in her body, and she knew he was no less aware of his. Suddenly he bent over the net and began fishing again.

As they walked back along the flats, carrying the full bucket, she said, " Now that you've helped me catch them, Peter, you'll have to help me eat them."

He didn't answer, so she went on. " I've always wanted to go picnicking. It sounds so romantic. But I wouldn't know how to make a fire, or cook them, or—anything." He still said nothing. " Shall we have a moonlight picnic tonight, Peter ? "

" I'm going out with Jill tonight. We're going to the pictures."

" Couldn't you tell her—oh, tell her anything."

He looked down at her, and she saw a look come into his eyes. It was a look she had seen in the eyes of many men. But she knew that it had come into the eyes of Peter Williams for the first time in his young life. She had brought it there for the first time.

They sat together on the deserted dunes, staring into the fire. Myrna said, " A penny for your thoughts, Peter."

He didn't answer but poked at the embers with a piece of charred driftwood.

" Never mind," she said, " I know what you're thinking."

She laughed at his startled blush and ran lightly down the beach to gather some more driftwood.

When she came back she was limping. She had stepped on a jagged shell.

" Here," he said, " let me look at it."

She dropped the driftwood on the dwindling pile and sat down next to him. He peered anxiously at her foot.

" It's nothing," he said, " just a little cut. The bleeding will disinfect it." But he kept holding her foot, feeling about the sore spot tenderly.

She ran her fingers through his hair, and he froze, held his breath. Then, suddenly she shifted her weight. She was in his arms. She put her hands upon his cheeks, held his face, and kissed him. She felt his body tense, surprised and shocked, but then slowly he relaxed, close to her.

" You've never been kissed like that before, have you ? " She half whispered the words as she lay back in his arms.

He was breathing hard, and when he tried to answer, a queer-sounding croak came out. So he said nothing.

She wanted to laugh. "You've never kissed Jill like that, have you?"

He shook his head.

"Why not?" She was teasing him, gaily, tauntingly.

"Didn't you like it, Peter?" She edged closer to him. The look was in her eyes. "Didn't you like it?" The look in her eyes was in her voice now, too.

For answer his arms went about her, frightened, hesitant, then firm. He kissed her.

When he let her go she lay in his arms. He stared down at her, seeming not to know her, amazed, confused.

"You learn quickly, don't you?" she said softly. She felt warm and happy and pleased.

Then she scrambled to her feet and ran down towards the water, her words sifting back to him on the wind, "Come on, Peter, let's go for a last swim, before the sun goes down."

They lay staring into the dying fire as night crept on to the beach. She had changed from her wet suit into a sweater and slacks. She was comfortable; pleasantly full, pleasantly happy.

She asked him more about his girl. Jill and he had known one another about a year, he told her. Yes, he had been on picnics with Jill. Yes, he had walked with her over the dunes in the moonlight. Yes, holding hands. No, he had not kissed Jill often. Only a couple of times. "Jill is bashful," he said, in a slightly amused tone.

She smiled to herself, knowing that he had been bashful, too; and knowing that he could not be that way again.

A breeze sprang up from the dark ocean and swept along the sand. She shivered. "Peter, would you run up and get the rug out of my car. It's getting cold."

He brought the rug and together they spread it out, carefully. She lay down. The wind whistled through the grasses high up on the dunes. The moon, unveiled now, cast a strange silver light upon him as he stood above her.

"Peter."

"Yes?" His voice was strained, strange.

She lay on her back, one hand in the sand letting it slip absently through her fingers. "Come here," she said, and her voice was as warm as the glowing embers. "You must be cold, Peter. You come and lie on the rug, too."

The next morning she was stretched in the sun on a beach chair. She smiled a little, thinking of Peter. She had been at the desk getting her letters, when he came in. He had winked at her in a secret sort of knowing way, which annoyed her. Jill was waiting

about, too, and had said, "Hello, Peter." There was a hurt in her voice.

"Oh, hello, Jill."

She smiled, remembering the disinterested way he had said, "Oh, hello, Jill."

As she thought of him, she saw him coming towards her. He was carrying a rug. When he reached her his eyes went briefly over her body. The look was in his eyes again. But she was not pleased.

"It's getting rather chilly out here," he said. "I thought you might want this rug." He didn't speak in the same straight way he had yesterday. There were double meanings in his voice.

"Thank you, Peter."

He stood above her while she tucked the rug round her legs. "What are you doing to-night?" he asked.

"Nothing," she said absently.

"How about us going for a moonlight swim?" He spoke low, scarcely moving his lips. "We could cook some sausages and then—" He went on telling her how she need not be afraid to swim in the night because he had done it many times, and he was an excellent swimmer, had swum for his school, in fact, so she would be quite safe.

She hardly heard him. She was looking at someone who sat in a beach chair near her. Another of the hotel guests. He had light blond hair, and wore swimming trunks. His body was bronzed from the sun. He was reading a mystery. But, as Myrna stared at him he lowered the book and looked at her. She smiled at him, and then, shyly, he smiled back. He looked about sixteen . . .

* * *

DOUBLE DUTY

Parents who raise
A child by the book
Can, if sufficiently vexed,
Hasten results
By applying the book
As well as applying the text.

W. E. F.

YEAR'S AT THE SPRING

When wheat is green, when hawthorn buds appear—

Whirl, snow, on the blackbird's chatter ;
You will not hinder his song to come.
East wind, Sleepless, you cannot scatter
Quince-bud, almond-bud,
Little grape-hyacinth's
Clustering brood,
Nor unfurl the tips of the plum.
No half born stalk of a lily stops ;
There is sap in the storm-torn bush ;
And, ruffled by gusts in a snow-blurred copse,
" Pity to wait " sings a thrush.

Love, there are few Springs left for us ;
They go, and the count of them as they go
Makes surer the count that is left for us.
More than the East wind, more than the snow,
I would put back these hours that bring
Buds and bees and are lost ;
I would hold the night and the frost,
To save for us one more Spring.

GORDON BOTTOMLEY

Dēbut

Dramatic is the only word for the way spring came, that year. For weeks the earth had been icebound, like an empty theatre. Then, suddenly, the lights were turned on, up above. The delicate fingers of the wind switched away the dust sheets of the snow. And the empty arena filled, as though with cloaks and dresses and scarves, in a thousand shades of green.

And the orchestra began to tune up. A faint ripple of bird-song in the forest, like the flute that always seems to be having such fun, all on its own, in the orchestra pit. And then more melody, sweet and sudden, from the wood wind, and soon, an exquisite chaos of music . . . a phrase here, and a phrase there, up, down, and

sideways . . . the lovely, unorganized music of spring, holding in it the echo of summer dances . . . the rough, fresh music which a man can weave to the patterns of his heart's desire.

Drama, drama everywhere. The spears of the daffodils were thrust through the earth with a single arrogant gesture. Or so it seemed. Like a white scarf thrown over a dancer's shoulders the apple blossom covered the bare boughs. Or so it seemed. You found yourself staring at an empty stage, and suddenly, before your eyes, a transformation scene was taking place.

BEVERLEY NICHOLS, *A Village in a Valley*

Spring Midnight

The stars are soft as flowers, and as near ;
The hills are webs of shadow, slowly spun ;
No separate leaf or single blade is here—
All blend to one.

No moonbeam cuts the air ; a sapphire light
Rolls lazily, and slips again to rest.
There is no edgèd thing in all this night,
Save in my breast.

DOROTHY PARKER

N'importe

This Asiatic weather has certainly affected our cold constitutions. The Duchess of B—— is afraid of being shot wherever she goes. A man has followed Miss Clavering *on foot* from the East Indies ; is quite mad ; and scenes are daily expected even in the drawing-room. Another man has sworn to shoot a Miss Something, *n'importe*, if she did not run away with him from the Opera.

Sir Joshua Reynolds has a niece who is troubled with one of these passionate admirers, to whom she has refused her hand and her door. He came a few days since to Sir Joshua's ; asked if she was at home ; and, on being answered in the negative, he desired the footman to tell her to take care, for he was determined to ravish her (pardon the word), whenever he met her.

COUNTESS OF UPPER OSSORY,
Letter to George Selwyn, April 17, 1779

Snow Flowers

. . . They wandered as they willed, there was no hand to hurt them,
And were white out of the mist, and quickly gone again,
In this wood of white flowers of the snow-pale peony,
Like snow, first seen upon a bunch of roses,
Sweet cups of snow, or like the snowball melted,
Then turned to roses, to wild open roses,
Wider than known, and sister to the lotus,
With a heart of honey of a honey colour,
Lying like the lotus on an air like water ;
The wood all full of them, in all the mist,
And white stags walk among them, pale as all the petals . . .

SACHEVERELL SITWELL

In Confidence

Villa Nova, Val di Ticino,
18th March, 1491

I am now here at Villa Nova, where the loveliness of the country and the balmy sweetness of the air make me think we are already in the month of May, so warm and splendid is the weather we are enjoying ! Every day we go out riding with the dogs and falcons, and my husband and I never come home without having enjoyed ourselves exceedingly in hunting herons and other waterfowl . . .

Nor must I forget to tell you how every day Messer Galeazzo and I, with one or two other courtiers, amuse ourselves playing ball after dinner, and we often talk of your Highness, and wish that you were here . . . Since I cannot thoroughly enjoy any pleasure or happiness unless I share it with you.

And I must tell you that I have had a whole field of garlic planted for your benefit, so that when you come, we may be able to have plenty of your favourite dishes !

Letter from the Duchess of Milan to the Duchess of Mantua,
Trans. JULIA CARTWRIGHT

In The Spring—

There's mating madness in the air,
Passionate, grave. The blossoms burst . . .

JOHN GALSWORTHY, 1867-1933

EXPERIMENTAL MARRIAGE

"All I want is something in a bottle," moaned his victim

by JOHN COLLIER

WHEN Mr. Dickinson put his hand down under the bed, to retrieve his fallen handkerchief, it was at once seized by another hand, hairy and hard as iron but, even as the nervous gentleman's mild blood stood prickling in his veins, it was pressed, with unmistakable reverence and amity, to a pair of bristly lips.

"Oh!" thought Mr. Dickinson, and, withdrawing his hand, he sat bolt upright, tense in every nerve, in the very middle of his bed.

"Who's there?" he cried.

"Only me," said the fiend who still crouched submissively below.

"Come out of that," said Mr. Dickinson at last, for he was greatly reassured by the meek and piping tone of this answer. The fiend bumped and scuffled out, and stood sheepishly on the hearth rug.

What an oaf! His voice had belied him. He was much the size and shape of the largest gorilla, and his hulking body was covered with a short, napless fur, like that of a nasty toy, cheap and gingerish. This fur showed through the gaps in his costume, which was infinitely too small for him, for he had stolen it, on his way here, from a little curate half his size, the better to commend himself to Mr. Dickinson, who abhorred the nude.

A word as to the natures of these two, thus dramatically met at midnight in the first floor front bedroom of 10, Boskyn Road, N.14.

Dickinson, a bachelor in the best sense of that much abused term, had led a stainless life. Surrounded by luxury, for he was a cashier in one of our largest stores, he had never allowed luxury to lead him astray. His stamps tallied: his books, best nutriment of commerce, were uncooked. The racecourse knew him not; the bar and billiard saloon had offered their allure unavailingly. For all that, he was no nincompoop who had never known temptation. If the young ladies of the store withheld their hopeless coquetry, wed by his Galahad eye, it was nevertheless his need daily to

steel himself against the gleaming and rounded battalions of beauty, for the way to his desk lay through the corset department, and at an hour when the simpering nymphs, still ungarbed, stood in all the sweet shamelessness of their rosy wax.

It was this experience of the dark god, or devil, within the masculine blood stream, that made our hero so enthusiastic a murmurer of "Hear, hear!" at meetings of the Anti-Sunbathing Association. His own pure flesh was, I am glad to say, never exposed. Save where the veins ran like azure rivulets just beneath the skin, it was white as a gardenia under the chaste and cosy wool. His corns, though, were his martyrdom.

Enough of Dickinson. Who was the fiend?

He was, of all Hell's legions, the most calfish hobbledehoy, stupid to such a degree that not even his bulk could gain him a place in the least football team of the lowest division of the Infernal League. There, where everyone plays, this spelt failure. Our fiend, whose name was Tazreel, collected about him one-and-twenty similar outcasts, and proposed that they should start a club between themselves. Their objection was that he was too great a booby to be included, and that they had no ball. Let him supply the second deficiency, they said, and they would overlook the first. Nettled, he vowed to, and shambled off to the outer playing fields in the hope of cadging an old one. He saw a cousin of his taking some practice shots with a battered Pope of the fourteenth century, horribly burst asunder at the seams.

"Nick, Nick, what is that ball?"

"Black Mass, Tazreel, why do you stare at him?"

"Give him me. Give him me."

"No."

His cousin described a couple of turns about Tazreel, dribbling with tantalizing finesse.

"Get one for yourself," he said.

"I can't," cried Tazreel. "You know what sort of stuff they serve out nowadays. Machine made muck that bursts up at the second kick! I want one for a proper game. Give him me. Give him me."

"No." And the cousin netted the pontifical pilule.

"If you want a decent one," he said, "go and tempt a good quality on earth. Yes, go and tempt Mr. Dickinson," he added with a snigger, and scampered off after his game.

At that moment, from an adjacent pitch, the bemuddied and leathern soul of Colonel Ingersoll hurtled through the air, and struck Tazreel a stinger on the ear.

In his fury he sent the poor Colonel back in tremendous style.

"I should be a fine player if I got a chance," he murmured,

heartened by the success of his kick. "Damn it! I'll try for Dickinson. I can but fail."

This was madness. He told no one of what he was going to do, for fear of mockery, for in that place they talked of Dickinson's soul, as office boys do of a film star: meat for their betters.

However, he breached up through the surface of the earth, caught up the curate, disrobed him in mid-air, popped him through the bishop's bedroom window, and next moment was under the bed, waiting till Mr. Dickinson should reach down for his handkerchief before switching off the light and settling himself to sleep.

Now he stood upon the hearth rug, subserviently turning the round hat in his hands.

"Who are you, and what do you want?" said Mr. Dickinson, very much in a flutter again when he saw how extremely bulky this apparent parson appeared.

The fiend fell upon his knees with a supplicating gesture.

"I want to make myself useful, sir," he mumbled. Mr. Dickinson experienced a spasm of genuine revulsion. It must be, he thought, one of the unemployed, masquerading in a cast off rig.

"Why don't you work?"

"It's like this, sir: I'm one of the fallen angels, sir; I can prove it. Look." And whisking round, he slightly adjusted his costume and displayed to our astonished hero the convincing evidence of his tail.

"What's more, I'm repentant, sir," he continued, speaking, in his eagerness, out from between his knees. "Yes, I want to make good, to go straight in future. Oh, boy! I want to be altogether changed. But how?

"'You go to Mr. Dickinson,' they told me. 'He's the only man who can show *you* the right path. Be his disciple, serve him, clean his boots, make him rich, any little thing. Take no wages, learn from him: he'll show you what a decent, clean, wholesome, manly life is,' they said."

"*Who* said?" asked Mr. Dickinson.

The fiend, with an expression of awe, jerked his thumb at the ceiling.

"Indeed?" said Mr. Dickinson. "Did they?"

"Yes, sir. They think a lot of you. 'He's wasted,' they said, 'in his manner of life. Go thou, extend his scope, and increase his good works. Make him famous, envied, admired. Make the ladies love him.'"

"Oh!" said Mr. Dickinson. "I must think this over. I must go into it thoroughly." He tapped his teeth importantly. "If I decide to assist you," he said, "I'll let you know. Meanwhile, I can't have you about this place. Er—begone. Hi! And meet

me," he added, causing the fiend to reappear, more effectively than any servant who opens the door again to catch a last instruction, "and meet me on the Embankment by Battersea Bridge at seven tomorrow evening."

With that the fiend vanished respectfully, and Mr. Dickinson lay all of a tremble, excited, timorous, and bewildered.

It might be a trap. On the other hand, need he fear temptation? He desired nothing that was not respectable. But if the fiend spoke the truth, it might be a terrible responsibility, a nuisance. He thought of his landlady. But then, if those above had laid this task upon him, dared he refuse? Never shirk responsibility, that way lies promotion; the success booklet was firm on this point. Besides, the fellow might have powers: he might conjure him up a motor car. Yes, with such a helper he might do anything: become the rage at charity entertainments, a super Maskelyne on the side of good. Why, he might enter sun bathing establishments, and after a long homily to the ribald nudes he might, at a single flourish, clothe them all in unremovable vests, permanent pants, non-displaceable knickers, everlasting suits, and eternal petticoats and gowns. His imagination soared, and he saw himself cleaning up the whole place. The prospect was intoxicating. How he wished tomorrow evening was come: there were a hundred questions he longed to ask.

He might, though, have dispensed quite easily with the interval, for Tazreel had withdrawn only from the sight. He had lingered invisibly in the room to devour the recumbent Mr. Dickinson with a loving and burning gaze. He sat, picking his devilish great dog teeth, on the lower bed rail.

In the cold morning light, ordinariness crowded in, and our hero found his visions fade a little. They seemed fantastic, dangerous. Every step that he took towards his daily work inclined him more to shun such extravagant dreams, and continue to keep to his straight, if extremely narrow, path.

"There's a catch in it somewhere," he said.

Alas, Mr. Dickinson! A spark of ambition still smouldered in his breast, and as he entered the store, where it might have been quenched for ever, it prompted him to a little action which undoubtedly changed the whole course of his life.

As he made his way up the aisle of immodest figures, it chanced that one, portrayed by the modeller as in the act of bending to draw on a non-existent stocking, had been backed right into his path.

"Outrageous!" cried Mr. Dickinson, thus roundly roused from his reverie. And transferring his newspaper into his left hand, he gave the shameless figure a well-deserved smack. But before that real thrill, which always follows on a good act, had had

time to bathe him in its rosy glow, he saw with horror that he had been too rough, too much the cave man. The bending figure shook on its pedestal, and then, slowly, absurdly almost, toppled forward, and lay prone upon the floor, utterly still.

"You clumsy fool," cried the deputy superintendent brassières and suspender belts, emerging from behind an outsize figure. "You've broken her nose."

"I didn't break her nose," cried Mr. Dickinson. ("The floor did," he added to himself, for he was incapable of a lie.)

"You did. I saw you."

"I deny it."

"*In flagrante delicto.*"

"*In toto.*"

"Don't touch her, anyone," shouted the deputy superintendent. "We'll have his finger prints to prove it."

A debate ensued, and everyone was against Mr. Dickinson. Miss Warble came forward and described the slap; Albert, lift-boy, who had also witnessed it, serving as interpreter when occasion required.

"Ugh!" said Miss Warble.

"Damn it, man!" said the manager, before them all, "I'd not have thought it of you. It's not the damage; that can, and shall, be made good out of your salary. But Wilfrid Dickinson a hypocrite! This is a great blow to me. In future your books shall be specially checked. Who knows?"

"Oh, dear!" said Mr. Dickinson.

"What's more, you shall be transferred to the ironmongery department."

"I resign," said Mr. Dickinson, bethinking himself of his powerful disciple.

"Resign, and be damned!" thundered the manager.

A slight monitory tremor ran through our hero's veins at these words. It was lost, though, in other tremors—those of rage, shame, and resignation. He pouted, and withdrew.

Misunderstood! So ran the current of his thoughts during the hours that followed. He wandered feverishly from tea shop to tea shop, finding forgetfulness in none. Just before five he was convulsed by a final spasm, and burst into a heavy perspiration.

"I forgive them," he said.

But, rage deserting him, he was still not at peace.

"To have misunderstood?" So ran the current of his thoughts during the two hours before his appointment. Could his visitor have been the agent of a cruel joke? He remembered the great Thompkins hoax in the baby linen department in '27. A dastardly affair!

"Duped!" he cried, arriving at the bridge five minutes too early, and finding no one awaiting him. "And I've thrown up my job! My job! My job!" In reiteration the word became a mere meaningless syllable. He could hardly believe that it connoted, literally—his job.

Soon, however, he saw the fiend approaching him, shambling along at a good pace, and pausing only to take an occasional kick at a stone. He was in a better fitting suit: he had, in fact, robbed another, and a gigantic clergyman.

"Late," said Mr. Dickinson, pettishly, for his nerves were all on edge.

With infinite respect the fiend displayed to him a superb gold watch, the hands of which exactly marked the hour.

"Accept it, sir," he said. "I spent my last penny on it, as a slight mark of my affection and esteem. But pray, sir, may I venture to hope . . ."

"I have decided to give you a trial," said Mr. Dickinson, "provided, that is, you—ah, your powers are satisfactory. Show me some of your tricks. Change that match box into a motor car."

"I cannot transform objects," said Tazreel, "nor in any way run counter to the laws of nature. Only the big five can do that. But," he added, seeing Mr. Dickinson's look of disappointment, "I am strong, I am swift, I can be invisible, and I enjoy excellent luck at cards. This being so, you need not want for a motor car."

"Honest work, and plenty of it, is certainly your best help in making good," said Mr. D. "Look to it that you use your powers well, and I will apply their fruits in a way that will be to your credit. What do you propose to do? I will not have you play cards. You say you are swift. Perhaps you could run for prizes in the sports."

"There's not much to be made in that way," said the fiend. "If only another of us had repented along of me, we could have gone as front and back legs of a Derby winner."

"No racing," said Mr. Dickinson sternly. "Perhaps you could put your strength to good use. A super navvy on piecework, eh?"

"The Union would crush me," replied the fiend. "I might box."

"A manly sport," cried Mr. Dickinson, feeling his muscle. "You shall become world's champion, and I will be your manager. Thus we will get money for good works, for the fact is, I am leaving my present situation in order to devote myself to the administrative side."

"I was there when the row was on," said the fiend.

"Then you saw how I was treated."

"They certainly did you dirt. Say. Say, let's muscle in in the morning and clean that joint up. Yeah?"

"No," said Mr. Dickinson, "I have forgiven them. However, I might go in and try to make them see their vileness. You could be at hand to stay any attempt at brutal violence. I trust there will be none."

The fiend eyed his quarry in grudging admiration. He began to appreciate his quality.

"It'll be a bit of practice," he said, "if I'm to start in as a pug."

"Streuth," he added, "I've just remembered I had a bit on the three-thirty. Filly came in, too. 'Scuse me, boss, I'll nip off and collar the polony. Then we'll have some eats."

"No," said Mr. Dickinson, "I have forbidden you horse racing. But stay—this was done before you heard my command. Perhaps the money should not be allowed to rest in the hands of the bookmaker, or the unhappy man may get drunk and beat his wife. That must be prevented at all costs. Go then, this once, and we will break bread, and devote the rest to good works. Out of evil cometh forth good! How much is it?"

"I stand to net five hundred," said the fiend.

"Good heavens! That will furnish our headquarters. Go, then. We will meet outside the Trocadero and take a frugal meal at the nearest restaurant."

It was a pleasant meal. Mr. Dickinson had oysters, to keep his strength up for his future toil; turtle soup that he might know what it was the Lord Mayor ate, and if it would be good for the poor; a little turbot, and some Pol Roger, a grouse, for he had heard St. Francis was fond of birds; a peach just to taste one, and a little Bisquit Dubouche for his cold. The fiend had a whiting and a plate of cold beef ordered for him by his master.

They discussed their plans. Next day a suitable suite for their headquarters was to be chosen, something very simple though of a good address, furnished more like a home than an office, but with a roll-top desk in it.

"I know the very place," said Tazreel; "it's just a modest sort of flatlet in Park Lane."

"Let it have a kitchenette for you to work in," said his master, "and a miniature gymnasium for my exercises and your professional training. A little drawing room, a *bijou* dining room, a morning room, the sort of thing necessary for entertaining distinguished visitors, a tiny library for myself, the barest sleeping accommodation, and if possible a weeny swimming bath for the encouragement of the suitably begarbed in pursuit of cleanliness and health."

"Just the place I had in mind," said the fiend. "And at a rental of only fifty a week."

"Can you earn proportionately?" asked Mr. Dickinson, rather shocked.

"Sure thing!" was the reply.

"You may have some cheese if you like," said Mr. Dickinson.

Next morning they went early to the store, when Mr. Dickinson rebuked his oppressors, who were, when they advanced to make a savage attack on him, invisibly but severely restrained.

"Pick up that figure," said Mr. Dickinson, when they had fled in pain and terror. He pointed to the disgraceful mannequin who, with her nose restored, still bent to tug the non-existent hose. "I will have her in my room, where she will no longer lead people astray. She will be a constant urge to effort."

Hastily clothing the figure in a cheap tailor made, for which Mr. Dickinson commanded his follower to leave the wholesale price on the counter, they took it by the elbow and bore it off to a taxi, thus presenting to the inquisitive crowd all the appearance of detectives arresting a recalcitrant shoplifter.

Noonday found them installed in Park Lane. Mr. Dickinson outlined to the fiend a routine of scrubbing and sweeping, waiting at table, admitting visitors, tending the wardrobe, and acting as secretary chauffeur. He described exactly how he liked his breakfast prepared. These little matters, he said, combined with the practice and execution of a career as boxer, and with attendance on himself, when he went to rebuke the wicked, would keep Tazreel busy, and this would be half the battle towards regeneration. The fiend sighed a little. He was brisk when put to it, but he was devilishly lazy by nature, and when he contemplated, in addition to all these tasks, the yet harder one of tempting his master, he almost wished himself back on the desolate touchlines of Hell.

However, he set to, and by labouring twenty-two hours out of the twenty-four he managed to keep abreast of his duties. He was greatly chagrined to find, though, when he entered on his pugilistic programme, that the science of our British heavy weights was such that not all his strength could bring him victory without a preliminary tattoo of rabbit punches, nobs on the smelling bottle, rousers on the cigar trap, and cruel fibs in the bread basket. His claret was tapped, shutters put up, ears thickened, grinders made to rock in their sockets. Not only that, but, lest his tail should betray his shameful origin when he was stripped for combat, Mr. Dickinson insisted that he should be docked, and performed the operation himself with a pair of garden shears, notched for branch cutting.

Altogether, his lot was a miserable one. The worst of it was that, as the months dragged by, Mr. Dickinson showed no signs of committing mortal sin within the meaning of the Act.

Sometimes, when he stood, with folded arms and reproachful,

penetrating gaze, on the threshold of a sun-bathing establishment or night club, his sinister bodyguard would jerk a suggestive thumb at some particularly shameless sylph, or piquante dancer on the table, and twitch, meanwhile, the corner of his mouth violently towards his eye. A stern rebuke would immediately bring him to his senses.

He went to great trouble to introduce Mr. Dickinson into the society of millionaires, that he might become covetous and misappropriate the subscriptions that poured in. His master, returning from a Babylonic week end, told him that he had arranged a slapstick part for him on the films, the salary of which was commensurate with the incredible sufferings and exertions required.

He introduced a vile book into the covers of Mr. Dickinson's *Black Sheep Turned White*. Mr. Dickinson told him to glance through each new novel that came out, and to bring to him anything similarly deserving of his public censure.

The fiend, hoping to scare him into a murderous panic, sent him letters, apparently signed by a prominent fellow committeeman, and declaring that he (the fiend) was in reality a notorious dancer, named Lola de Montmorency, who had disappeared in unsavoury circumstances some time ago, now masquerading in male attire. Exposure was threatened. "This must be the work of some practical joker," said Mr. Dickinson, glancing gravely at the super-masculine countenance of his unattractive factotum.

That worthy then tried to persuade him to enter politics. Mr. Dickinson pointed out that politicians were frequently compelled to tell lies.

He described, in glowing terms, the pleasures of eastern monarchs. His master cut down his diet.

He earnestly sought the good man to consider enlarging his influence by becoming King Wilfrid I. Mr. Dickinson pondered the matter carefully, sighed, and said he feared the throne could hardly become his by immaculate means. However, he instructed the fiend to put in his spare time speaking at street corners on the off chance of bringing about a bloodless revolution.

The fiend, then, as if he had become raving mad, staggered in with baskets of jewels which he said he had found; raised up Helen, Cleopatra, and all that lot; discoursed on witchcraft; transported the good man to tops of mountains overlooking fine landscapes; sat up in adjacent flats during his two hours' rest; pinching the babies to make them cry; tried to scrape up an acquaintance for his master among artists; wrote "Arise, Dickinson, first Emperor of the World!" in phosphorous on his ceiling, and finally introduced him to Mrs. Walker. All was of no avail.

Poor Tazreel grew as lean as a cat. He no longer took light

hearted kicks at stones that lay in his path; he no longer sang at his scrubbing and sweeping. He was a victim of overwork, nervous depression, insomnia, fits of giddiness, spots before the eyes, backache, bile, utter fatigue.

One day, as he was polishing Mr. Dickinson's brass plate on the front railings, a party of happier fiends passed by who were doing themselves well at the Dorchester, from which they were organizing a mass temptation of the Y.M.C.A. They saw Tazreel, and gave each other the nudge. Peals of laughter floated back from this party of well fed, easy living, successful executives, and seared the taut nerves of the poor plodding failure on the steps.

The fiend, hysterical with rage, rushed upstairs and broke the waxen trophy in the bedroom.

"You clumsy fool," said Mr. Dickinson, entering upon the crash. "However, I forgive you. I'll get a stenographer. Your spelling is atrocious," he added, "your typing is slow, your shorthand non-existent. It will give you time to get a weight lifting job at one of the halls."

Tazreel, at this last sentence, uttered a bitter cry. He felt the system was blind, corrupt, utterly rotten, that allowed a man to mislead a poor fiend into the hope of an hour or two's leisure, and then to sentence him to new toils, without incurring immediate and eternal damnation. He began to feel that he never would be able to entrap Mr. Dickinson. There was no one to encourage him, no one to advise, to sympathize, to care. That night the poor fellow cried himself to sleep.

Two days later Maisie Williams sat at the old fashioned typewriter near the big roll-top desk. She was just a mere slip of a thing, with big, almost frightened blue eyes that darkened nearly to black in moments of excitement. Maisie had had a hard time. She was alone in the world, and the manager at her last place had been a beast. It was with a sigh of real thankfulness that she sank into the pleasant atmosphere of the little library in Park Lane, where a restful sense of luxury and beauty, for which her starved soul craved, filled the air, and her employer seemed a regular simp.

That day Mr. Dickinson dictated an unusual number of letters. Tea was served in the oak panelled, book lined room. Maisie could not repress a tiny girlish squeal of delight when she saw the delicious *petits fours* which accompanied the fragrant teapot.

"What a child you are!" said Mr. Dickinson kindly. "To squeal like that over a few cakes. My, what a noise you'd make if someone offered you a pearl necklace! It would be deafening."

"Not if it was a relation or a fiancé," said Maisie simply. "But you must not think me a child, Mr. Dickinson, for the fact is, I

very seldom see any cakes. But, really, I seem to have been grown up ever since I can remember: I've not had any proper childhood at all, I mean. You see, my dear mother died when I was twelve." But Maisie could not go on. She sat bravely blinking back the tears from those big eyes that seemed to have grown very helpless and very serious, and bright, and appealing, and wistful, and so on.

"That's all right; that's all right," said Mr. Dickinson benevolently.

"It's so kind of you, Mr. Dickinson, to let me tell you all this."

"That's all right," said Mr. Dickinson. "Perhaps I am rather a lonely person myself."

"I say, Mr. Butler, the boss is a pretty rich man, isn't he?" said Maisie to Tazreel later on when Mr. Dickinson had gone off to his meeting.

"Yes'm, he sho is," replied that worthy, pretending to be a negro.

Maisie sat silent, thrilled. What a strange world it was, where a great big rich man could be lonely, just like her little insignificant self. It seemed incredible, too good to be true. She thought of the lion and the mouse.

Yet before a week had passed, Mr. Dickinson, as though the species had become mixed, was calling her "kitten."

In a fortnight they were engaged.

Tazreel, when he heard the news, retired to his room, and dashed his head several times against the wall. He was upset. Not being a fiend of foresight, he saw nothing in this arrangement but the prospect of two bosses instead of one. Besides, he was rather keen on her himself. He felt utterly broken, and determined to resign.

But as he approached the drawing room door, he heard Maisie say, in her high, clear, girlish voice, into which (so adaptable was she) there was already creeping a little of the authoritative tone inevitable to her future high position.

"Wilf, when we're wed there's just one teeny little change I want to make, apart from refurnishing and taking over the rest of the house."

"My little Maisy-waisy shall never ask twice," replied the impassioned Dickinson, "for anything that her Wilfywumkin can give her."

"I want you to have a proper staff of servants," said Maisie, "and shunt that tough looking batman of yours right off the premises. He looks at me in a way I don't like."

"I'll break every bone in his body," cried Mr. Dickinson warmly. "But yet, I think you must be mistaken, my dear. He

works for next to no wages, and he's the most useful creature imaginable."

"If that's what you call love," said Maisie in a disappointed tone, "it's not what I do. Just like men: you promise a girl anything just to get your way, and then let her down. I was only testing you, but, thank goodness, I've found out in time."

"Not at all, my love," said Mr. Dickinson hastily. "I was only playing. He shall go tomorrow."

"And where will the money come from then?" murmured the listening fiend, catching cries of "Yum! yum!" and "Oh, honey!" from within. He crept back to his little cubby hole feeling faintly cheered. At all events, there would be no more washing up.

"In future," said Mr. D. to him next morning, "you are excused all domestic duties. In fact, I don't expect you to be seen here at all. If you come, appear to me only when I'm quite alone; do you understand?"

"O.K., chief," replied the fiend.

"That doesn't mean you're to be idle. On the contrary, you must exert your earning powers to the utmost. The future Mrs. D. needs beauty, she says. It would be downright selfishness to continue to live in the frugal style of a hermit. So you'd better get some more big contracts as soon as you can."

The honeymoon passed like a dream. Tazreel enjoyed it only less than Mr. Dickinson. Left behind in London with nothing to attend to but occasional cables demanding money, he neglected his contracts, lived the life of a man about town, and replenished the exchequer in a way that would have shocked his worthy master.

It was a great day when the domestics crowded into the hall of Mr. Dickinson's little palace in Park Lane to welcome their blushing master and his bride. Tazreel sat invisibly on the stairs, pleased to see the glowing looks which the happy husband lavished on his spouse, and still more pleased to see that two short months in Venice had changed the modest, self-effacing typist into a great lady, in no way unfitted to grace the mansion her adoring partner had prepared for her.

"Why, Wilf," she cried, "this hall looks cramped to me after the Splendide. Can't you widen it somehow? I don't want Society to say I squeeze it to death."

"It would mean taking the house next door, to make this hall any wider," said Mr. Dickinson with a smile.

"Well, take it, then," replied his consort, who was a little frayed by the journey. "You're a man, aren't you? Or aren't you? You got to prove it some way, you know."

"S'sh, my dear!" murmured her consort. "The servants will hear you." And he ushered her into the principal drawing room

from whence the sounds of billing and cooing floated out to the fiend's enraptured ear.

"You must earn fifty thousand before the end of the month," said Mr. Dickinson to him, at their next interview.

"I'll try, boss," he replied. "But money's not so easy in these days. Still, I think I know a way."

"What's that?" said Mr. Dickinson. "But spare me the details. We've a great deal of work to discuss. The organization will have to be modified."

A little while later he summoned the fiend again.

"What was that I asked you for, before the end of the month?"

"Fifty thousand," said Tazreel.

"What, only that? I must be losing my memory. I shall need a hundred and fifty at the least. Be sure you don't let me down."

"I doubt I can come by it honestly," said Tazreel, pulling a long face.

"What's that?" cried his master. "You, an ex-fiend, to talk to me in that way! I hope you do not think I would command you to do anything dishonest. Get it, I say, and don't let me hear another word about it. Put the money on my table next week without fail, or I cast you off, and back you go to Hell for ever."

Tazreel asked nothing much better than this, provided he could only take Mr. Dickinson with him. He half thought of getting him to compromise himself over the money, but feared he might slip off the hook; besides, theft by proxy is a matter for trial, and the fiend wanted immediate possession of his booty.

He saw, in his invisible visits to their *ménage*, that Mrs. Dickinson, though in all other respects the worthiest young woman in the world, had been starved of beauty so long that her appetite for it was tremendous. She was also a little ambitious to cut a figure among the smart set, and showed signs of not being so passionately enamoured of her husband as he was of her.

In short, the besotted wretch was constantly bothering Tazreel for money, and no longer showing any interest in how it was come by. The fortunate devil, now restored to cheerfulness, did no work except a few cracksman's jobs, which were child's play, and, keeping half the proceeds for himself, you may be sure he had a jolly little bachelor establishment round the corner in Mount Street, played pranks all over the town, and heartily commiserated his fellows at the Dorchester on the embarrassment they must feel on being seen with their young victims in public.

"I married mine off six months ago," he said. "He is already in debt to the tune of half a million, and soon will sign his name to anything for further supplies. That's nothing, however: wait till he becomes jealous. My only trouble then will be to prevent

him damning himself so completely off his own bat as to be put up for raffle, it being said that I had no hand in it. Fear nothing, though; I shall be watchful to prevent that disaster."

As a matter of fact, Mr. Dickinson very soon paid a visit to the fiend's snug little place in Mount Street. He was so broken down by love and his wife's tantrums that he no longer summoned him as before, but would ring at his door quite humbly after dinner and ask the butler if Mr. Tazreel could possibly spare him a few minutes on a matter of importance. Generally it was money he was wanting: this time, after a good deal of beating about the bush, he asked Tazreel if he could do anything for him in the way of a love philtre.

"What?" cried the fiend, pretending astonishment. "Do you find yourself insufficiently enraptured by such beauty, charm, and talent as your wife has, that you'd resort to such means of being awakened to it?"

"No, indeed," said the poor fellow. "Her virtues are plain enough, but so also is the fact that she is a little impatient when I fail to come up to the high standard her fine taste demands. In short, I would have her a little more in love with me, that she might overlook my blemishes, without my having to gild them to the ruinous extent I do. Besides, if I don't become more attractive in her eyes, I can't help feeling (it's probably only my fancy) that I may find an intruder in the house: a home wrecker, I mean."

The fiend, though knowing perfectly well there had been one of that sort hanging about for the last month, chose not to mention it, nor did he give him any sort of warning, but only the philtre: the consequence was, that in a very short time there was not one home-wrecker in Park Lane, but at least ten.

When there are ten, a suspicious, prying husband, such as Mr. Dickinson had become, generally gets wind of one of them sooner or later. One night the unhappy man broke in upon the fiend's ease: he was in a terrible state.

"Ask me no questions," he said, "but tell me, have you anything that will undo the effects of that cursed love philtre you gave me? It's all because of that, I'm sure."

"Love," replied the fiend, "is, as you yourself should know, a very tricky passion. In cases like your wife's, what lies in the power of any poor devil to arouse, is often such as the Prince of Darkness himself could not quell. I fear, my dear Dickinson, that we shall have to resort to witchcraft."

"Heaven forbid!" cried the distracted wretch piteously.

"Why, as to that, it does," replied the sardonic fiend.

"All I want is something in a bottle," moaned his victim.

"Come, Dickinson," said the fiend, with an abominable brisk-

ness, " it's time to be honest with yourself, to play the man. You can't just accept my help and shut your eyes to the measures I have to take on your behalf, as you've been doing over money matters, for example, for the last six months."

" What ? Do you mean to say the money was not come by honestly ? " cried the poor fool in affright. " Good gracious, and I needed another forty thousand this very evening. I must have it, too. Maisie says she must have a tiara : she finds the place draughty."

" Tell her to get it from young what's-his-name," was his sly answer.

" Don't madden me."

" Well, here's the money. It came from a late bank messenger, who is getting later every minute, and who will never arrive. Take it. All the rest was come by in much the same way. This little bit won't make any difference."

" After all, it's not for a selfish motive," murmured Mr. Dickinson. " I can't have Maisie getting a cold in the head, can I ? "

" No," said the fiend, with a smile.

" Now about this witchcraft," he continued. " You'd better make up your mind quickly. Every minute you hesitate, you're leaving your wife alone. And, as you know, she's very highly strung."

" Oh, dear, what have I to do ? "

" Oh, just kill a white goat. That's nothing. Butchers do it every day. And gabble a few words after me. What's there in that, eh ? "

" After all, I can always repent," said Mr. Dickinson tremulously.

" Yes—always," said the fiend.

He gave Mr. Dickinson a stiff brandy and soda, and excused himself for a moment, to fetch the goat, he said. Actually, he took advantage of his withdrawal to telephone to Park Lane to say that Mr. Dickinson was unexpectedly detained and could not return before morning.

He then went back, leading in a poor old nanny, whom his dupe despatched amid a positive blaze of Bengal Lights, provided gratis by the fiend. After an hour or two spent in such jiggery-pokery, our hero found himself in possession of a phial which contained no less than half a gill of tap water.

" Now, I suppose, I'm what you might call a lost soul," he said, trembling like a blancmange.

" *I* wouldn't call you such," said the fiend.

" No, of course I can repent."

" You'd better wait till you've administered that," remarked

Tazreel, indicating the phial; "or it would be as useless as tap water."

"All right; I don't repent, then. He! he!"

"Spoken like a man! I'll stroll round with you. Here! Take the knife as a little memento."

They walked round in silence through the pleasant night air. When they reached Mr. Dickinson's door:

"I'll just come in and have a drink," said Tazreel.

"Better not, old chap. Maisie doesn't appreciate you."

"Oh, don't worry about the missus. She's in bed. See, there's no lights at all down below."

They entered the hall.

"Nice hat," said the fiend carelessly, picking up a topper from the table. "Yours?"

". . . *No.*"

"Why, that's certainly the low-down," said the fiend, Capone-ishly. "Just while you were jeopardizing your soul for her sake—yeah?"

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"Dickinson, show yourself a man," said the fiend sternly. "You *are* a man, aren't you? Or aren't you?" He imitated Maisie's voice to perfection.

"Oh! Oh! Oh!"

"You got that knife," shouted the fiend fiendishly. "Come on! I'll hold 'em down."

They rushed up the stairs. Mr. Dickinson applied his ear to the door; the fiend silently opened the door of the lift shaft. They burst into the bedroom; there were screams, and the deed was done. Mr. Dickinson, with a cry of horror, flung down the fatal blade and turned and bolted out of the room. The fiend followed, tripped him up on the landing, stooped like a hawk after his falling body as he toppled down the lift shaft, nabbed his soul as it popped out, and, with one tremendous kick, landed it favourably into the line up of Tazreel's United, and in a moment the game was in full swing.

* * *

ASKING FOR TROUBLE

The fundamental reason that women do not achieve so greatly as men do is that women have no wives. Until such time as science or economics corrects this blunder of nature we shall remain, I fear, the inferior sex.

Professor MARJORIE NICHOLSON
of Columbia University

SONG OF COURTSHIP

Translated by Arthur Waley from the Chinese, Seventh Century B.C.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb into our homestead,
Do not break the willows we have planted.
Not that I mind about the willows,
But I am afraid of my father and mother.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of what my father and mother say
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb over our wall,
Do not break the mulberry-trees we have planted.
Not that I mind about the mulberry-trees,
But I am afraid of my brothers.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of what my brothers say
Indeed I am afraid.

I beg of you, Chung Tzu,
Do not climb into our garden,
Do not break the hard-wood we have planted.
Not that I mind about the hard-wood,
But I am afraid of what people will say.
Chung Tzu I dearly love;
But of all that people will say
Indeed I am afraid.

My True Love

Outside the Eastern Gate
Are girls many as the clouds ;
But though they are many as clouds
There is none on whom my heart dwells.
White jacket and grey scarf
Alone could cure my woe.

Beyond the Gate Tower
Are girls lovely as rush-wool ;
But though they are lovely as rush-wool
There is none with whom my heart bides.
White jacket and madder skirt
Alone could bring me joy.

Wedding Song

My lord is all a-glow.
In his left hand he holds the reed-pipe,
With his right he summons me to make free with him.
Oh, the joy !

My lord is care-free.
In his left hand he holds the dancing plumes,
With his right he summons me to sport with him.
Oh, the joy !

CYPRIAN CAT

I saw the far garden wall, topped all along its entire length with cats, like a nursery frieze

by DOROTHY L. SAYERS

IT'S extraordinarily decent of you to come along and see me like this, Harringay. Believe me, I do appreciate it. It isn't every busy K.C. who'd do as much for such a hopeless sort of client. I only wish I could spin you a more workable kind of story, but honestly, I can only tell you exactly what I told Peabody. Of course, I can see he doesn't believe a word of it, and I don't blame him. He thinks I ought to be able to make up a more plausible tale than that—and I suppose I could, but where's the use? One's almost bound to fall down somewhere if one tries to swear to a lie. What I'm going to tell you is the absolute truth. I fired one shot and one shot only, and that was at the cat. It's funny that one should be hanged for shooting at a cat.

Merridew and I were always the best of friends; school and college and all that sort of thing. We didn't see very much of each other for a long time because we were living at opposite ends of the country; but we met in town from time to time and wrote occasionally and each of us knew that the other was there in the background, so to speak. Two years ago, he wrote and told me he was getting married. He was just turned forty and the girl was fifteen years younger, and he was tremendously in love.

It gave me a bit of a jolt—you know how it is when your friends marry. You feel they will never be quite the same again; and I'd got used to the idea that Merridew and I were cut out to be old bachelors. But of course I congratulated him and sent him a wedding present, and I did sincerely hope he'd be happy. He was obviously over head and ears; almost dangerously so, I thought, considering all things. Though except for the difference of age it seemed suitable enough. He told me he had met her at—of all places—a rectory garden-party down in Norfolk, and that she had actually never been out of her native village. I mean, literally—not so much as a trip to the nearest town. I'm not trying to convey that she wasn't pukka, or anything like that. Her father was some queer sort of recluse—a medievalist, or something—desperately poor. He died shortly after their marriage.

I didn't see anything of them for the first year or so. Merridew is a civil engineer, you know, and he took his wife away after the honeymoon to Liverpool, where he was doing something in connection with the harbour. It must have been a big change for her from the wilds of Norfolk. I was in Birmingham, with my nose kept pretty close to the grindstone, so we only exchanged occasional letters. His were what I can only call deliriously happy, especially at first. Later on, he seemed a little worried about his wife's health. She was restless; town life didn't suit her; he'd be glad when he could finish up his Liverpool job and get her away into the country. There wasn't any doubt about their happiness, you understand—she'd got him body and soul as they say, and as far as I could make out it was mutual. I want to make that perfectly clear.

Well, to cut a long story short, Merridew wrote to me at the beginning of last month and said he was just off to a new job—a waterworks extension scheme down in Somerset; and he asked if I could possibly cut loose and join them there for a few weeks. He wanted to have a yarn with me, and Felice was longing to make my acquaintance. They had got rooms at the village inn. It was rather a remote spot, but there was fishing and scenery and so forth, and I should be able to keep Felice company while he was working up at the dam. I was about fed up with Birmingham, what with the heat and one thing and another, and it looked pretty good to me, and I was due for a holiday anyhow, so I fixed up to go. I had a bit of business to do in town, which I calculated would take me about a week, so I said I'd go down to Little Hexham on June 20th.

As it happened, my business in London finished itself off unexpectedly soon, and on the sixteenth I found myself absolutely free and stuck in an hotel with road drills working just under the windows and a tar-spraying machine to make things livelier. You remember what a hot month it was—flaming June and no mistake about it. I didn't see any point in waiting, so I sent off a wire to Merridew, packed my bag and took the train for Somerset the same evening. I couldn't get a compartment to myself, but I found a first-class smoker with only three seats occupied, and stowed myself thankfully into the fourth corner. There was a military-looking old boy, an elderly female with a lot of bags and baskets, and a girl. I thought I should have a nice peaceful journey.

So I should have, if it hadn't been for the unfortunate way I'm built. It was quite all right at first—as a matter of fact, I think I was half asleep, and I only woke up properly at seven o'clock, when the waiter came to say that dinner was on. The other people weren't taking it, and when I came back from the restaurant car I found that the old boy had gone, and there were only the two women left. I settled down in my corner again,

and gradually, as we went along, I found a horrible feeling creeping over me that there was a cat in the compartment somewhere. I'm one of those wretched people who can't stand cats. I don't mean just that I prefer dogs—I mean that the presence of a cat in the same room with me makes me feel like nothing on earth. I can't describe it, but I believe quite a lot of people are affected that way. Something to do with electricity, or so they tell me. I've read that very often the dislike is mutual, but it isn't so with me. The brutes seem to find me abominably fascinating—make a beeline for my leg every time. It's a funny sort of complaint, and it doesn't make me at all popular with dear old ladies.

Anyway, I began to feel more and more awful and I realized that the old girl at the other end of the seat must have a cat in one of her innumerable baskets. I thought of asking her to put it out in the corridor, or calling the guard and having it removed, but I knew how silly it would sound and made up my mind to try and stick it. I couldn't say the animal was misbehaving itself or anything, and she looked a pleasant old lady; it wasn't her fault that I was a freak. I tried to distract my mind by looking at the girl.

She was worth looking at, too—very slim, and dark with one of those dead-white skins that make you think of magnolia blossom. She had the most astonishing eyes, too—I've never seen eyes quite like them; a very pale brown, almost amber, set wide apart and a little slanting, and they seemed to have a kind of luminosity of their own, if you get what I mean. I don't know if this sounds—I don't want you to think I was bowled over, or anything. As a matter of fact she held no sort of attraction for me, although I could imagine a different type of man going potty about her. She was just unusual, that was all. But however much I tried to think of other things I couldn't get rid of the uncomfortable feeling, and eventually I gave it up and went out into the corridor.

I just mention this because it will help you to understand the rest of the story. If you can only realize how perfectly awful I feel when there's a cat about—even when it's shut up in a basket—you'll understand better how I came to buy the revolver.

Well, we got to Hexham Junction, which was the nearest station to Little Hexham, and there was old Merridew waiting on the platform. The girl was getting out too—but not the old lady with the cat, thank goodness—and I was just handing her traps out after her when he came galloping up and hailed us.

"Hullo!" he said "why that's splendid! Have you introduced yourselves?" So I tumbled to it then that the girl was Mrs. Merridew, who'd been up to Town on a shopping expedition, and I explained to her about my change of plans and she said how jolly it was that I could come—the usual things. I noticed what

an attractive low voice she had and how graceful her movements were, and I understood—though, mind you, I didn't share—Merridew's infatuation.

We got into his car—Mrs. Merridew sat in the back and I got up beside Merridew, and was very glad to feel the air and to get rid of the oppressive electric feeling I'd had in the train. He told me the place suited them wonderfully, and had given Felice an absolutely new lease of life, so to speak. He said he was very fit, too, but I thought myself that he looked rather fagged and nervy.

You'd have liked that inn, Harringay. The real, old-fashioned stuff, as quaint as you make 'em, and everything genuine—none of your fake antiques. We'd all had our grub, and Mrs. Merridew said she was tired; so she went up to bed early and Merridew and I had a drink and went for a stroll round the village. It's a tiny hamlet quite at the other end of nowhere; lights out at ten, little thatched houses with pinched-up attic windows like furry ears—the place purred in its sleep. Merridew's working gang didn't sleep there, of course—they'd run up huts for them at the dams, a mile beyond the village.

The landlord was just locking up the bar when we came in—a block of a man with an absolutely expressionless face. His wife was a thin, sandy-haired woman who looked as though she was too down-trodden to open her mouth. But I found out afterwards that was a mistake, for one evening when he'd taken one or two over the eight and showed signs of wanting to make a night of it, his wife sent him off upstairs with a gesture and a look that took the heart out of him. That first night she was sitting in the porch, and hardly glanced at us as we passed her. I always thought her an uncomfortable kind of woman, but she certainly kept her house most exquisitely neat and clean.

They'd given me a noble bedroom, close under the eaves with a long, low casement window overlooking the garden. The sheets smelt of lavender, and I was between them and asleep almost before you could count ten. I was tired, you see. But later in the night I woke up. I was too hot, so I took off some of the blankets and then strolled across to the window to get a breath of air. The garden was bathed in moonshine and on the lawn I could see something twisting and turning oddly. I stared a bit before I made it out to be two cats. They didn't worry me at that distance, and I watched them for a bit before I turned in again. They were rolling over one another and jumping away again and chasing their own shadows on the grass, intent on their own mysterious business—taking themselves seriously, the way cats always do. It looked like a kind of ritual dance. Then something seemed to startle them, and they scampered away.

I went back to bed, but I couldn't get to sleep again. My nerves seemed to be all on edge. I lay watching the window and listening to a kind of soft rustling noise that seemed to be going on in the big wisteria that ran along my side of the house. And then something landed with a soft thud on the sill—a great Cyprian cat.

What did you say? Well, one of those striped grey and black cats. Tabby, that's right. In my part of the country they call them Cyprus cats or Cyprian cats. I'd never seen such a monster. It stood with its head cocked sideways, staring into the room and rubbing its ears very softly against the upright bar of the casement.

Of course, I couldn't do with that. I shooed the brute away, and it made off without a sound. Heat or no heat, I shut and fastened the window. Far out in the shrubbery I thought I heard a faint miauling; then silence. After that, I went straight off to sleep again and lay like a log till the girl came in to call me.

The next day, Merridew ran us up in his car to see the place where they were making the dam, and that was the first time I realized that Felice's nerviness had not been altogether cured. He showed us where they had diverted part of the river into a swift little stream that was to be used for working the dynamo of an electrical plant. There were a couple of planks laid across the stream, and he wanted to take us over to show us the engine. It wasn't extraordinarily wide or dangerous, but Mrs. Merridew peremptorily refused to cross it, and got quite hysterical when he tried to insist. Eventually he and I went over and inspected the machinery by ourselves. When we got back she had recovered her temper and apologized for being so silly. Merridew abased himself, of course, and I began to feel a little *de trop*. She told me afterwards that she had once fallen into the river as a child, and been nearly drowned, and it had left her with a what d'ye call it—a complex about running water. And but for this one trifling episode, I never heard a single sharp word pass between them all the time I was there; nor, for a whole week, did I notice anything else to suggest a flaw in Mrs. Merridew's radiant health. Indeed, as the days wore on to mid-summer and the heat grew more intense, her whole body seemed to glow with vitality. It was as though she was lit up from within.

Merridew was out all day and working very hard. I thought he was overdoing it and asked him if he was sleeping badly. He told me that, on the contrary, he fell asleep every night the moment his head touched the pillow, and—what was most unusual with him—had no dreams of any kind. I myself felt well enough, but the hot weather made me languid and disinclined for exertion. Mrs. Merridew took me out for long drives in the car. I would

sit for hours, lulled into a half-slumber by the rush of warm air and the purring of the engine, and gazing at my driver, upright at the wheel, her eyes fixed unwaveringly upon the spinning road.

We explored the whole of the country to the south and east of Little Hexham, and once or twice went as far north as Bath. Once I suggested that we should turn eastward over the bridge and run down into what looked like rather beautiful wooded country, but Mrs. Merridew didn't care for the idea; she said it was a bad road and that the scenery on that side was disappointing.

Altogether, I spent a pleasant week at Little Hexham, and if it had not been for the cats I should have been perfectly comfortable. Every night the garden seemed to be haunted by them—the Cyprian cat that I had seen the first night of my stay, and a little ginger one and a horrible stinking black Tom were especially tiresome, and one night there was a terrified white kitten that mewed for an hour on end under my window. I flung boots and books at my visitors till I was heartily weary, but they seemed determined to make the inn garden their rendezvous. The nuisance grew worse from night to night; on one occasion I counted fifteen of them, sitting on their hinder-ends in a circle, while the Cyprian cat danced her shadow-dance among them, working in and out like a weaver's shuttle. I had to keep my window shut, for the Cyprian cat evidently made a habit of climbing up by the wisteria. The door, too; for once when I had gone down to fetch something from the sitting-room, I found her on my bed, kneading the coverlet with her paws—pr'rp, pr'rp, pr'rp—with her eyes closed in a sensuous ecstasy. I beat her off, and she spat at me as she fled into the dark passage.

I asked the landlady about her, but she replied rather curtly that they kept no cat at the inn, and it is true that I never saw any of the beasts in the daytime: but one evening about dusk I caught the landlord in one of the outhouses. He had the ginger cat on his shoulder, and was feeding her with something that looked like strips of liver. I remonstrated with him for encouraging the cats about the place and asked whether I could have a different room, explaining that the nightly caterwauling disturbed me. He half opened his slits of eyes and murmured that he would ask his wife about it; but nothing was done, and in fact I believe there was no other bedroom in the house.

And all this time the weather got hotter and heavier, working up for thunder, with the sky like brass and the earth like iron, and the air quivering over it so that it hurt your eyes to look at it.

All right, Harringay—I am trying to keep to the point. And I'm not concealing anything from you. I say that my relations with Mrs. Merridew were perfectly ordinary. Of course I saw a

good deal of her, because, as I explained, Merridew was out all day. We went up to the dam with him in the morning and brought the car back, and naturally we had to amuse one another as best we could till the evening. She seemed quite pleased to be in my company, and I couldn't dislike her. I can't tell you what we talked about—nothing in particular. She was not a talkative woman. She would sit or lie for hours in the sunshine, hardly speaking—only stretching out her body to the light and heat. Sometimes she would spend a whole afternoon playing with a twig or a pebble, while I sat by and smoked.

Restful! No. No. I shouldn't call her a restful personality, exactly. Not to me, at any rate. In the evening she would liven up and talk a little more, but she generally went up to bed early, and left Merridew and me to yarn together in the garden.

Oh! about the revolver. Yes. I bought that in Bath, when I had been at Little Hexham exactly a week. We drove over in the morning, and while Mrs. Merridew got some things for her husband, I prowled round the second-hand shops. I had intended to get an air-gun or a pea-shooter or something of that kind, when I saw it. You've seen it, of course. It's very tiny—what people in books describe as "little more than a toy," but quite deadly enough. The old boy who sold it to me didn't seem to know much about firearms. He'd taken it in pawn some time back, he told me, and there were ten rounds of ammunition with it. He made no bones about a licence or anything—glad enough to make a sale, no doubt, without putting difficulties in a customer's way. I told him I knew how to handle it, and mentioned by way of a joke that I meant to take a pot-shot or two at the cats. That seemed to wake him up a bit. He was a dried-up little fellow, with a scrawny grey beard and a stringy neck. He asked me where I was staying. I told him at Little Hexham.

"You better be careful, sir," he said. "They think a heap of their cats down there, and it's reckoned unlucky to kill them." And then he added something I couldn't quite catch, about a silver bullet. He was a doddering old fellow, and he seemed to have some sort of scruple about letting me take the parcel away, but I assured him that I was perfectly capable of looking after it and myself. I left him standing in the door of his shop, pulling at his beard and staring after me.

That night the thunder came. The sky had turned to lead before evening, but the dull heat was more oppressive than the sunshine. Both the Merridews seemed to be in a state of nerves—he sulky and swearing at the weather and the flies, and she wrought up to a queer kind of vivid excitement. Thunder affects some people that way. I wasn't much better, and to make things worse

I got the feeling that the house was full of cats. I couldn't see them but I knew they were there, lurking behind the cupboards and flitting noiselessly about the corridors. I was thankful to escape to my room.

Cats or no cats I had to open the window, and I sat there with my pyjama jacket unbuttoned, trying to get a breath of air. But the place was like the inside of a copper furnace. And pitch dark. I could scarcely see from my window where the bushes ended and the lawn began. But I could hear and feel the cats. There were little scrapings in the wisteria and scufflings among the leaves, and about eleven o'clock one of them started the concert with a loud and hideous wail. Then another and another joined in—I'll swear there were fifty of them. And presently I got that foul sensation of nausea, and the flesh crawled on my bones, and I knew that one of them was slinking close to me in the darkness. I looked round quickly, and there she stood, the great Cyprian; right against my shoulder, her eyes glowing like green lamps. I yelled and struck out at her, and she snarled as she leaped out and down. I heard her thump the gravel, and the yowling burst out all over the garden with renewed vehemence. And then all in a moment there was utter silence, and in the far distance there came a flickering blue flash and then another. In the first of them I saw the far garden wall, topped along all its entire length with cats, like a nursery frieze. When the second flash came the wall was empty.

At two o'clock the rain came. For three hours before that I had sat there, watching the lightning as it spat across the sky and exulting in the crash of the thunder. The storm seemed to carry off all the electrical disturbance in my body; I could have shouted with excitement and relief. Then the first heavy drops fell; then a steady downpour; then a deluge. It struck the iron-baked garden with a noise like steel rods falling. The smell of the ground came up intoxicatingly, and the wind rose and flung the rain in against my face. At the other end of the passage I heard a window thrown to and fastened, but I leaned out into the tumult and let the water drench my head and shoulders. The thunder still rumbled intermittently, but with less noise and farther off, and in an occasional flash I saw the white grille of falling water drawn between me and the garden.

It was after one of these thunder-peals that I became aware of a knocking at my door. I opened it, and there was Merridew. He had a candle in his hand, and his face was terrified.

"Felice!" he said, abruptly. "She's ill. I can't wake her. For God's sake, come and give me a hand."

I hurried down the passage after him. There were two beds

in his room—a great four-poster, hung with crimson damask, and a small camp bedstead drawn up near to the window. The small bed was empty, the beclothes tossed aside; evidently he had just risen from it. In the four-poster lay Mrs. Merridew, naked, with only a sheet upon her. She was stretched flat upon her back, her long black hair in two plaits over her shoulders. Her face was waxen and shrunk, like the face of a corpse, and her pulse, when I felt it, was so faint that at first I could scarcely feel it. Her breathing was very slow and shallow and her flesh cold. I shook her, but there was no response at all. I lifted her eyelids, and noticed how the eyeballs were turned up under the upper lid, so that only the whites were visible. The touch of my finger-tip upon the sensitive ball evoked no reaction. I immediately wondered whether she took drugs.

Merridew seemed to think it necessary to make some explanation. He was babbling about the heat—she couldn't bear so much as a silk nightgown—she had suggested that he should occupy the other bed—he had slept heavily, right through the thunder. The rain blowing in on his face had aroused him. He had got up and shut the window. Then he had called to Felice to know if she was all right—he thought the storm might have frightened her. There was no answer. He had struck a light. Her condition had alarmed him—and so on.

I told him to pull himself together and to try whether, by chafing his wife's hands and feet, we could restore the circulation. I had it firmly in my mind that she was under the influence of some opiate. We set to work, rubbing and pinching and slapping her with wet towels and shouting her name in her ear. It was like handling a dead woman, except for the very slight but perfectly regular rise and fall of her bosom, on which—with a kind of surprise that there should be any flaw on its magnolia whiteness—I noticed a large brown mole, just over the heart. To my perturbed fancy it suggested a wound and a menace. We had been hard at it for some time, with the sweat pouring off us, when we became aware of something going on outside the window—a stealthy bumping and scraping against the panes. I snatched up the candle and looked out.

On the sill, the Cyprian cat sat and clawed at the casement. Her drenched fur clung limply to her body, her eyes glared into mine, her mouth was opened in protest. She scrabbled furiously at the latch, her hind claws slipping and scratching on the woodwork. I hammered on the pane and bawled at her, and she struck back at the glass as though possessed. As I cursed her and turned away she set up a long, despairing wail.

Merridew called to me to bring back the candle and leave the brute alone. I returned to the bed, but the dismal crying went on

and on incessantly. I suggested to Merridew that he should wake the landlord and get hot-water bottles and some brandy from the bar and see if a messenger could not be sent for a doctor. He departed on this errand, while I went on with my massage. It seemed to me that the pulse was growing still fainter. Then I suddenly recollected that I had a small brandy flask in my bag. I ran out to fetch it, and as I did so the cat suddenly stopped its howling.

As I entered my own room the air blowing through the open window struck gratefully upon me. I found my bag in the dark and was rummaging for the flask among my shirts and socks when I heard a loud, triumphant mew, and turned round in time to see the Cyprian cat crouched for a moment on the sill, before it sprang in past me and out at the door. I found the flask and hastened back with it, just as Merridew and the landlord came running up the stairs.

We all went into the room together. As we did so, Mrs. Merridew stirred, sat up, and asked us what in the world was the matter.

I have seldom felt quite such a fool.

Next day the weather was cooler; the storm had cleared the air. What Merridew had said to his wife I do not know. None of us made any public allusion to the night's disturbance, and to all appearance Mrs. Merridew was in the best of health and spirits. Merridew took a day off from the waterworks, and we all went for a long drive and picnic together. We were on the best of terms with one another. Ask Merridew—he will tell you the same thing. He would not—he could not, surely—say otherwise. I can't believe, Harringay, I simply cannot believe that he could imagine or suspect me—I say, there was nothing to suspect. Nothing.

Yes—this is the important date—the 24th of June. I can't tell you any more details; there is nothing to tell. We came back and had dinner just as usual. All three of us were together all day, till bedtime. On my honour I had no private interview of any kind that day, either with him or with her. I was the first to go to bed, and I heard the others come upstairs about half an hour later. They were talking cheerfully.

It was a moonlight night. For once, no caterwauling came to trouble me. I didn't even bother to shut the window or the door. I put the revolver on the chair beside me before I lay down. Yes, it was loaded. I had no special object in putting it there, except that I meant to have a go at the cats if they started their games again.

I was desperately tired, and thought I should drop off to sleep at once, but I didn't. I must have been overtired, I suppose.

I lay and looked at the moonlight. And then, about midnight, I heard what I had been half expecting: a stealthy scrabbling in the wisteria and a faint miauling sound.

I sat up in bed and reached for the revolver. I heard the "plop" as the big cat sprang up on to the window-ledge; I saw her black and silver flanks, and the outline of her round head, pricked ears and upright tail. I aimed and fired, and the beast let out one frightful cry and sprang down into the room.

I jumped out of bed. The crack of the shot had sounded terrific in the silent house, and somewhere I heard a distant voice call out. I pursued the cat into the passage, revolver in hand—with some idea of finishing it off, I suppose. And then, at the door of the Merridews' room, I saw Mrs. Merridew. She stood with one hand on each doorpost, swaying to and fro. Then she fell down at my feet. Her bare breast was all stained with blood. And as I stood staring at her, clutching the revolver, Merridew came out and found us—like that.

Well, Harringay, that's my story, exactly as I told it to Peabody. I'm afraid it won't sound very well in Court, but what can I say? The trail of blood led from my room to hers; the cat must have run that way! I *know* it was the cat I shot. I can't offer any explanation. I don't know who shot Mrs. Merridew, or why. I can't help it if the people at the inn say they never saw the Cyprian cat; Merridew saw it that other night, and I know he wouldn't lie about it. Search the house, Harringay—that's the only thing to do. Pull the place to pieces, till you find the body of the Cyprian cat. It will have my bullet in it.

* * *

SOMEWHERE, SOMEWHEN—

Somewhere, somewhen I've seen,
But where or when I'll never know,
Three parrots of shrill green
With crests of shriller scarlet flying
Out of black cedars as the sun was dying
Against cold peaks of snow.

From what forgotten life
Of other worlds I cannot tell
Flashes that screeching strife:
Yet the shrill colour and the strident crying
Sing through my blood and set my heart replying
And jangling like a bell.

WILFRID GIBSON

THEY WERE ALL PRISONERS

For one reason or another these ten characters were prisoners at some time in their lives. How many of them can you remember ? Allow 5 points for each prisoner you can name, 5 for source, and another five for the author, making a maximum score of 150. The answers are on page 127.

1. *For fourteen years he was a forgotten man on an island prison in the Mediterranean, an innocent victim of a political plot and known only as No. 34.*

2. *Convicted of breach-of-promise and assessed £750 damages, this indignant gentleman spent three months in a debtors' prison rather than pay.*

3. *For killing his uncle during a quarrel this man spent the rest of his life in prison, escaping from it only in remarkably pleasant dreams.*

4. *Because he mistook a respectable milliner for a prostitute, this ardent young clergyman spent six months in jail for assault.*

5. *Imprisoned in her room, this mad woman escaped and tried to murder her husband in his bed.*

6. *When her husband ran off with her money and household goods, this young woman was thrown into Newgate for debt but finally escaped with the aid of a notorious highwayman.*

7. *Though confined within stone walls his mistress's visits gave him a rare sense of freedom.*

8. *The Lord Deputy imprisoned him for licentiousness, but his sister's pleas and the Deputy's fall from grace saved him.*

9. *In an attempt to rescue her sister, who has eaten forbidden fruit, she is captured by goblins.*

10. *Imprisoned by her jealous husband in her bridal chamber, she might be seen at her window until her death, when a bust was erected to her there.*

SLANT ON THE SKIPPER

Exactly over the shoal was pencilled a neat little cross

by RICHARD HOWELLS WATKINS

WHEN the *Ellen* took the ground on Esperanza Bank, Capt. Sturtevant Wyte jumped ten feet, like an elderly gazelle. He rang down his engines before Bull Hobart, the mate, could stretch out his arm. The water on that bank was like grey milk. Not the kind where you could send a man aloft to conn the ship by the colour. The last cast of the lead had given four fathoms, double what the *Ellen* was drawing. She hadn't hit hard or touched coral, but she was dead under your feet.

For an instant Captain Wyte stood by the engine telegraph, thinner than usual and stiff enough to snap off. He stared ahead at the range he'd been following across the shoals, the top of Three Toes against Barracuda Rock. He glanced at his watch and then skittered down the ladder to the chartroom for a look at the barometer.

A choppy little sea was hissing across the banks under the drive of the usual northeasterly trade wind. It kept the water roiled.

Aft, Mr. MacGregor, the chief engineer, still mostly asleep, heaved his six-foot length out of a deck chair under the fluttering awning and slouched below to take over the mill.

The rest of the crew manœuvred to watch the Old Man. A little jam is handy sometimes if you want to see your captain operate. When you step aboard a ship you're handing the skipper your neck on a platter, and Sturtevant Wyte was new to this bunch. All they had on him was he got pneumonia too often up on the North Atlantic, had enough cash and credit back of him to buy the *Ellen* and had picked up a good hunk of cargo in a port where another shipmaster hadn't.

On the bridge, Bull Hobart, the mate, had dropped his jaw to half-mast, which didn't make him any handsomer.

Even when he was happy, Bull looked as though a reject from a correspondence course in sculpturing had hacked him out of a lopsided piece of granite. And now he wasn't happy. He crashed his fists together and swallowed down some of the briskest language in the West Indies.

Coming back, the Old Man stopped dead on the top step of the ladder the moment he pinned a sharp black eye on Bull's so-called face.

"I believe you heard in the Coffee Club, Mr. Hobart, that recent gales had reopened the passage across Esperanza Bank?" he asked.

Anything said in the Coffee Club about pilotage you could tie to. They didn't even let a chief mate open his yap in there unless he had a master's licence. Though he was fresh in this part of the world, Captain Wyte knew that.

Bull Hobart dragged the edge of his foot across the bridge planking. "Not in the Coffee Club, sir," he groaned. "I met that blasted Linden just outside. He mentioned he'd heard you could carry three fathom right across the bank, same as before."

Jerome Linden was the captain who hadn't got the cargo. A good few shippers knew he shot sharp, not square.

Capt. Sturtevant Wyte straightened up even tauter. He took a turn right across the bridge, tap, tap, tap, tap. Sweat drops off Bull's face matched the fall of the Old Man's feet.

"Captain Linden," Wyte said. "Ah, yes. He would know."

It's following the shortest line between port and port that makes the difference between getting by and going broke.

The competition was tough as a sailorman's neck. From Miami to Port of Spain, steamship lines were beginning to skim the cream again. Cheaply run schooners grabbed the small stuff. Wyte and Linden were trying it in between.

Quietly the Old Man picked up his glasses from the box under the bridge-rail and glued them on a speck astern. It was Linden's *Grouper*. Pushing no water. Just waiting.

Captain Wyte nodded his lined mahogany head. "Ah, yes, Captain Linden," he repeated gently. "Well, Mr. Hobart, let us not despair. Good may come of this yet."

Bull Hobart's jaw dropped another inch in surprise. "We can easy get her off, sir," he said. "She took it like you'd lay down a baby."

Captain Wyte blinked. Down on deck, eardrums were bulging to tune in anything he let go. A master-owner is this way; either he's mostly a seaman and apt to lose his ship to the land sharks, or he's mostly a landsman and apt to lose his ship to the sea. The crew hadn't figured out which kind Wyte was.

It almost seemed as if the Old Man knew his reputation and future here were at stake. For a full minute he meditated. Then he blew down the tube. "Kindly fill your tanks, Mr. MacGregor," he said. "I want to hold her in position."

He sent the second mate off with the work boat to sound all

around the channel. Then he turned to Bull and began crisply to give him orders about laying out an anchor.

Well, that settled the argument. All hands knew then this was mostly a landsman in command. Because the holding her in position, sounding and laying-out-anchor stuff was fresh out of the textbook. It made sense, sure, if you were piled up on a lee beach and apt to be pounded harder ashore. But it didn't apply here.

Below in the engine room, MacGregor backed away from the tube, still staring at it, and jerked his thumb at his first assistant, Jack Oliver.

"Get along to the foot of the bridge ladder, Jack," he said. "See can ye tell what the little man's up to."

"Why, he's weighting her down to keep her from being nudged into shoaler water before —"

"Get along!" roared MacGregor. He had stranded in all parts of the world. He started the pumps. Then he had a quick, private look overside. Wind and tidal current were both on her bow. No swell. She'd taken soft bottom at no more than four knots.

MacGregor's face creased up in question marks. Ashore, he'd been Wyte's chief supporter. But that was because, being Scottish, it had tickled him when the Old Man got a cargo away from Jerome Linden. "The little man is like drink to me," he'd said. "And the kick I get out of him is free." But he wasn't saying it now.

Jack Oliver came back. "That fat old walrus, Cap'n Linden, gave the Old Man a bum steer through Bull Hobart," he reported. "Linden's been tailing us in the *Grouper*. He must ha' figured we'd hit hard enough to buy assistance."

MacGregor grunted. "He'd be happier just picking pockets, that Linden!"

"Bull's lowering away the lifeboat to lay out an anchor. Yeah, an anchor! Just like they do in books. And the second mate, out astern in the work boat, is taking soundings from hell to breakfast and signalling 'em to the bridge. Wyte's laying 'em carefully on the chart. Make any sense to you?"

MacGregor's face went blank. "An anchor!" he said. "Hell's own Scotch boilers! The little man could back her off, most likely, by giving me a jingle to reverse her." He knotted up his face. "I hope the sun hasn't got the wee man," he said. "His hair's a bit thin on top." He rubbed a hand over his own mop. "Still, ye've heard of an unprincipled man, no doubt?"

"Sure," said Oliver. "But would you call old Wyte —"

"I would not," MacGregor cut in sternly. "By my observation

he's what ye haven't heard of—a principled man. That means he runs on principles, like we do on coal. That's why, I'm thinking, you wouldn't understand the man. And yet —" He pulled a scowl that sent lines right down to his neck. " I've seen him stand for two hours within five inches of the bridge rail and never prop an elbow on it," he said. " They're powerful straight up-and-down things, principles. Stand by ! "

Bull Hobart got busy. With his deck hands he chocked and braced the lifeboat athwartship to take the strain, and slung the port anchor under the boat on a bridle. The old man had a careful look at Captain Linden's *Grouper*, which was still a good way off, and then called Bull up on the bridge.

Bull glanced curiously at the chart. It was jam full of neatly pencilled soundings around the ship's position in the channel.

" Pull out toward the second's boat, Mr. Hobart," Captain Wyte told him. " I'll signal you when to let go the anchor."

Then, more privately, he gave Bull other instructions.

Bull Hobart's eyes stuck out. " But, sir —"

" Those are your orders, Mr. Hobart," Wyte said curtly.

" Aye, aye, sir," Bull Hobart said slowly.

He got going. On the after deck they payed out the wire cable to his boat as he pulled on astern of the ship.

The Old Man was infernally fussy where he wanted that anchor. Dead astern was where it belonged. But before he gave Bull the office to drop the heavy hook, he puttered over the fancy soundings, and finally he called the second back to the ship to check with him. About a point on the port quarter, toward the south edge of the channel, was where he finally signalled Bull to let go the anchor.

Bull made a lubberly mess of the job. When he released the pelican hook, the anchor, suspended under the lifeboat, plunged to the bottom smartly enough. But the anchor cable stretching from the ship, a strong wire, was leading over the boat just then. It brought up tight across the forward gunwales. The bow was pulled under and the stern went up. She hung that way with her air tanks keeping her afloat and the buoy line coiling and twisting around like all blazes. " Mess " was correct.

The Old Man stood silently on the bridge. MacGregor stuck his head up out of the engine room and then scratched it. Everybody looked at the *Grouper* shoving her rusty bow into this scene of marine disaster on the bank.

Captain Linden, a big, long-armed fellow, was hanging over the bridge rail. You could catch the gleam of his teeth as the *Grouper* closed up. She wasn't drawing over nine feet, but Linden had rung her down dead slow. He wasn't trusting the dope he had passed out to Bull Hobart. He didn't say anything ; just shook

his head to his mate, Gus Bond, and Bond shook his head right back.

Laughing, Linden pushed out his long arm full length to point at Bull Hobart and his messed-up anchor and lifeboat. As if it was likely that Gus Bond would miss it! You could hear Bull Hobart. He had his heart in it.

Captain Linden snapped a finger to a boy. The boy caught up a big megaphone and handed it to him. Linden shoved the trumpet at the *Ellen* as if it were a gun.

"*Ellen*!" he roared. "You're aground! This channel across Esperanza Bank has been impassable for ships of your draft for six months!"

He dropped the megaphone and his teeth gleamed.

"Captain Linden!" The Old Man had a high, carrying yelp that cut the wind. Everybody in the *Ellen* drew a long breath and hoped that this was going to be good. But they couldn't be sure. Nobody had yet heard Captain Wyte do any cussing.

Linden waved a hand, very cocky, in response to the Old Man's hail.

"I offer you two thousand dollars to tow us clear of the ground!" Wyte called. "No cure, no pay!"

A groan rose up from the *Ellen*, a sound made up of shame, rage, grief and frustration. The crew hadn't expected that.

"There's your principled little man for you," Jack Oliver snarled at his chief.

MacGregor's groan topped the one out of the whole ship. "I've seen a deepwater sailor go haywire on the banks before this," he said. "But two thousand! I'm thinking he'd have to sell the ship to raise that much."

Jack Oliver grinned sourly. "Linden would libel her fast enough."

MacGregor shook his head. "I know," he muttered. "The little man's trying out the golden rule on Linden, all sweetness an' friendship. Ah, wurra! They hadn't heard of Captain Jerome Linden when they put that one in the book. Any time he'd hock the golden rule to buy himself a pair o' brass knucks!"

Wyte's call wasn't the blast Linden had expected. At that, it knocked him like the wallop of a big sea. He hung on the rail as if he were on the ropes, staring. Two thousand dollars to drag off the ship he'd schemed to put on the ground!

Linden heaved himself up on to his feet, still sort of stunned, and looked around for help. But Bond's face was as slug-happy as his own. Two thousand dollars for what looked like less than an hour's work.

In another two seconds Linden came out of it. He planted

his elbows, spread his legs and gave the *Ellen* a going over with his greedy but suspicious eyes that nearly took the paint off her. An offer like that would probably stand up in court, no matter how easy the job turned out to be.

Linden spoke to his mate, and Bond shoved the helmsman away from the wheel and took over himself.

Slowly the *Grouper* crept up along the starboard side of the *Ellen*. Linden kept working his head about her, studying her draft forward and aft, and how she lay. His eyes dug in like an X-ray machine and his broad face was narrowed and lined with distrust. It looked like a cinch, but he'd have to bring it off. "No cure, no pay," was an old salvage maxim.

Captain Wyte hailed him again, "Captain Linden! I'd like an answer!"

Linden took his eyes off the *Ellen* long enough to pick up his glasses and give the whole sweep of the horizon an inspection. Nothing in sight. He was alone with the *Ellen* on Esperanza Bank. There was no chance of anything else coming along to help her.

He trained his glasses on Wyte's ship and had himself a magnifying look. He gave the rigid little figure of Capt. Sturtevant Wyte a going over, and then he tried to beat up a clue out of the faces of the crew. Everybody on board was registering sullen anger and mortification, nothing else. They looked licked to Jerome Linden, and so did Bull Hobart's bunch in the lifeboat.

"Captain Linden!" the Old Man piped. "Will you kindly —"

Linden grabbed the megaphone and drowned him out, "You'll get your answer when I'm set!"

With Bond still handling the wheel, Linden manœuvred the *Grouper* up ahead of the *Ellen*, going dead slow. She didn't look badly off from that point, either, for the reason that she wasn't badly off. He swung the *Grouper* around and started back down current on the port side of the ship.

"You holed?" he roared at Wyte. "Hit coral?"

"Soft bottom," Wyte replied. "Taking no water."

Linden made up his mind. He shook his head. "You're in a tough spot, captain," he said, mellowing his roar unctuously. "It'll cost you three thousand. Not a cent less."

The *Grouper* had the current under her now. Gus Bond, at the wheel, said a word to Linden and lifted a hand to point to the anchor line stretching from the stern of the *Ellen* out to the lifeboat, a point on her port quarter. To dodge that setup, he'd have to favour the southern edge of the channel.

"Kick her around it!" Linden snapped over his shoulder, after one glance. He raised the megaphone again. "Three thousand, captain, and I want it in writing, before I'll pass you a

line!" he roared. "Speak up, captain!"

The current under the *Grouper* and the shove of her engines brought her down fairly fast on that anchor line. Like all seamen, Gus Bond was scared of getting a wire round his screw. He called for more speed and jammed his wheel over to port. The *Grouper* swung her head and went surging out to round Bull's boat.

"No deal!" Captain Wyte piped up. "I withdraw my offer!"

He raised his forearm with hand extended to take a quick bearing on the *Grouper*. Then he turned his back on her. For a moment, the tip of his finger rested on the chart.

Linden was bellowing at him through his megaphone, but Captain Wyte paid no attention. He beckoned to the second mate.

"Hoist code flag U, 'You are standing into danger,'" he said in a voice that crackled. "Hoist 'em slowly, mister."

Nobody can tell how much water there is along milky channel edges unless he has just taken soundings or is using his lead. Linden crowded the messed-up lifeboat ruthlessly to stay well within the channel.

A short length to southward of Bull's boat the *Grouper* cocked up her bow. She rose as if a big swell was running under her. It was—a swell of sand.

The *Grouper* slid way up on that shoal spot inside the line of the channel. She went dead. She really was on there.

MacGregor drew two useful lungfuls of air. He jabbed his elbow into Jack Oliver's ribs as if he figured on going through them.

"As simple as that!" he said, and hit himself violently on the head. Sweat broke out all over his face. "What a chance the little man took! What if Linden had said 'Yes' to that offer?"

Jack Oliver rubbed his ribs and started explaining. "That's psychology stuff. He gambled Linden's greed would grow if he made a big first offer like —"

"Ye should be a detective!" MacGregor snapped.

Capt. Sturtevant Wyte ceased studying the awkward angle the *Grouper* made with the horizon and nodded his head. He glanced up approvingly at the Uncle signal flag the second mate had just broken out.

"I believe he can get off there, mister," he said. "With our assistance."

The second had quit grinning. His eyes were bulging at the chart. Exactly over the shoal spot on which the *Grouper* now rested, there was pencilled a neat little cross. Exactly! That wasn't navigation. That was clairvoyance.

Out in the lifeboat, Bull Hobart, who knew as much about ground tackle as the next mate, was unscrambling the mess he had made, with a few crisp orders.

Captain Wyte moved slowly towards the engine-room voice tube, so slowly that Mr. MacGregor had time to save his professional reputation with a wild dive down the ladder to his end of the line. The order came, calm, unhurried, to empty the tanks, and then the jingle to reverse her. She came off like steam out of a whistle.

Though getting water under the *Grouper* again was another job entirely, the crew of the *Ellen* worked hours putting out anchors and rigging towlines without the slightest squawk. For the Old Man himself had paid a visit to the *Grouper*, sitting up very straight in the stern sheets and coming back, undamaged, with a salvage agreement in writing.

Ignominously, the reluctant *Grouper* came off when the Old Man was ready to move her. There was nothing else for her to do, for Wyte had the *Ellen's* two heaviest anchors carried out well ahead of her and put a steady strain on the towline with windlass and winch as well as with her main engine. It looked to the *Ellen's* crew as if they had drawn a master owner who could get by in two elements. But Mr. MacGregor was not too happy. He shook his head regretfully. "Ye should have charged him more than a thousand, sir," he ventured. "Your own share o' the salvage money should have been that much."

The little Old Man frowned. "Surely you do not imagine that it is my intention to touch any of that thousand, Mr. MacGregor?" he said severely. "Under the circumstances, a money payment from Captain Linden was indicated. Only by penalties can Captain Linden be brought to realize that the dissemination of false information regarding pilotage is unwise."

"But there's nothing wrong with the man's money; it's the man him—" MacGregor stopped in sudden thought.

"Since loss of life might conceivably result from such a trick, I did my distasteful duty," Captain Wyte cut in. "But, of course, making a profit on it would be quite against my principles. I'll not touch a cent of it."

"I see, sir," said MacGregor with great earnestness. With his mind on arithmetic, he waited hopefully for Bull Hobart to echo his captain's words and renounce his share. But Bull Hobart just wiped the sweat off his forehead and grinned stupidly. Stupidly?

MacGregor went back to the engine room. "Write it down in your book," he said to Jack Oliver. "Unprinciples don't pay, not when there's a principled little man around to correct 'em . . . free."

* * *

Everyone is as God made him, and very often worse.

MIGUEL DE CERVANTES

THE BLACKBOARD

How Jenny attained the crown and flower of every woman's life

by JESSAMYN WEST

THERE stands the little blackboard, not two feet from me. I don't know why I write "little"—it is really a good-sized board, 36 inches by 48 inches. This larger size was only three shillings more than the 18-inch by 24-inch board, a saving of 1.78d. per square foot—small in itself, but these small sums add up to something tidy finally. My form performed these mathematical calculations for me. Learn by doing. Let the problems come from real life. The real blackboard—an actual transaction. Grist for their eager minds.

There it stands, with today's motto, in my hand, still written across the top: *So little done, so much to do.* It was to have been a bond between Jenny and me. We had such a board at school, a bulletin board we called it. It was very stimulating. Jenny's education had been interrupted. I thought that in this way, without drawing undue attention to the fact, Jenny's mind would be led—gently led—towards fields of knowledge suitable to an educationalist's wife. She had—there is no need to fall into the past tense—she *has* a very good mind. I determined her degree of intelligence before I proposed marriage. It was surprisingly high.

I remember the occasion of the presentation of the blackboard—our first wedding anniversary. I like to make little rituals of these gift-festivals. Some men do not understand what these anniversaries mean to a woman. I am not one of them. Tenderness. Tenderness. This is everything to a woman. Rough, masculine impetuosity: this tears the soul of a woman, which I like to think of as the wing of a white butterfly—fragile, fluttering.

I brought the blackboard downstairs that morning—wrapped, beautifully wrapped. I even remember the paper wrapping: a may blossom pattern which I had selected because of the symbolism. Jenny was preparing breakfast, and since I had not mentioned the date no doubt she thought I had forgotten it. Then this festive package. She stopped her stirring at the stove and ran to me. "Arnold," she cried with that childlike impetuosity of hers, "a

present!" She began to tear at the wrapping as she always did with presents.

"Slowly, slowly," I said. "Savour it." The ribbons were beautifully tied. She was going to slash through them with a kitchen knife she had picked up from the sink. "The wrapping is part of the experience, too," I said.

It was delightful to watch her eagerness. She actually trembled as she untied the ribbons and wound them carefully round a cotton reel as I had taught her. Her colour, always high, came and went as it will when a woman of true feeling is moved. It was a charming little scene. I stood watching my wife of a year thinking how many men thoughtlessly deny themselves the joy of giving such pleasure.

When she had finally lifted the papers from the fine, slate board, she actually cried a little. She said it was so beautiful—that she had never dreamed of anything like it.

I was more than repaid for any trouble acquiring it had occasioned me.

"Dear," I told her, "it will be a bond between us. The written word means so much more than the spoken. Here we can share little gems of poetry, bits of inspiration. Learning together, dear, taking sustenance from the great minds. Doesn't it thrill you?"

I explained other uses of the board: the day's expenditures, names of all who telephoned, the day's menus, pertinent thoughts—all to be written down. And each morning the gem for meditation.

"Dear," I said, "this can be our little kitchen university, our mealtime encyclopedia."

And from that morning to this I have never failed before leaving for school to write on the board the day's motto, or to speak to Jenny of the assistance writing gives in the ordering of facts, the establishing of reason. If she could stand here now—reading over my shoulder—she would see that I practise what I preach.

It was duty led me to Jenny in the first place. Her brother, Alex Grogan, was developing unsocial attitudes in the schoolroom. It became necessary for me to interview his parents concerning him and I went over to Railway Avenue one evening for this purpose. His parents were out but his sister Jenny asked me into the house.

Such a house! It was not a home of poverty—my father-in-law doubtless earns more than I do—not "under-privileged," except in ways that matter to the soul. The clutter, the disorder, the taste! A mare's-nest of radios, highly-coloured cushions, artificial flowers, comic books, calendars, standard ash trays, dolls, and electric fires (two). In the midst of this chaos, Jenny.

Obviously a pure girl, a simple, trusting girl, but of that peculiarly lush type that is so attractive to unprincipled men. Every

iota of concern that I possess was instantly stimulated by her. In those cheap surroundings, with a brother like Alex, all that in Jenny was designed by Providence for the delight of a husband would be traduced.

"Won't you come in?" she asked.

She was naturally a little fluttered by having a caller of my position, but she controlled herself admirably. She sat me down in an upholstered chair. I had to remove a pair of scissors, a lemonade bottle, and a jar of skin cream from between the cushion and the back of the chair before I could lean back comfortably.

Jenny sat opposite me on the sofa. Her mother later told me that Jenny, though a Protestant, had talked as a child of becoming a nun. She still had that mild, gentle expression associated with these women—a sensitive face, very fair and soft looking. Her hair was pale, her eyes hazel. Her figure was the kind that film producers delight to exploit, long slender legs, prominent bust. Jenny then dressed in the fashion of the girls of Railway Avenue so that her anatomical proportions were emphasized. This was done unconsciously by Jenny, but it affected, nevertheless, a man of strong feeling.

"My family are at the pictures," she said.

"Don't you like pictures?" I asked.

"I'm pretty old to go with my parents."

"About sixteen," I bantered.

She was nineteen. She had been ill for two years with some rheumatic ailment but was now well.

"Well," I asked. "Where are the young men? Here's the flower, where are the bees?"

"They thought the flower had wilted," she said and blushed at this harmless little quip. She hid her confusion by lifting one of the room's innumerable fancy dolls—this one had been sitting astride an arm of the sofa—to her face. I suppose no good man can see a girl make such a gesture without being put in mind of the child the girl could bear.

Alex Grogan's continued anti-social behaviour necessitated frequent visits to Railway Avenue. I made these visits occasions to instruct Jenny: a book, a sheaf of writing paper, a single perfect flower. Objects calculated to help her rise above her unæsthetic surroundings.

I never took her out—to a film, that is, or restaurant. A man in my position has constantly to think of appearances. I was forty-two years old, in the prime of my manhood, a bachelor, an eminently "good match" as the ladies put it, and until I was positive as to the seriousness of my intentions I did not want to compromise the girl.

I soon realized, however, that I wished to be more to Jenny than

a mentor, and that for her sake I could forgive, if not overlook, the Railway Avenue ménage. Of course it had never occurred to Jenny that a man in my established position with a home in the best roads of town, a friend of leading citizens, could possibly aspire to her hand. The best she had ever hoped for, no doubt, in the way of a husband was some clerk—or mechanic. And now me.

No girl was ever wooed more gently. I will not say that I did not think at any time of my personal pleasure, but I was constantly thinking of what would be good for Jenny. I can look back now with none of the regrets some men have, to my days of courtship.

We were married privately. I did not want the solemnity of that holy occasion marred by the people of Railway Avenue. True, Jenny was by birth one of that group, but her spirit had already (I flattered myself) begun to show its kinship to mine. And I had had far too much of Alex in the classroom to want to share that tender moment at the altar with him.

Jenny had some romantic ideas about a honeymoon in an hotel, or at a seaside resort. She even mentioned a boat.

"My dear child," I said, "the bridal chamber is, for the bridal couple, the holy of holies. It should not be in a commercial house—it should not be a room occupied yesterday by you know not whom. It should be a sanctuary prepared by a dedicated man. Yes dear," I told her, "I am dedicated to your happiness. A sanctuary prepared for the ritual of a mystery."

How large her eyes grew when I spoke to her of these sacred things. "Dear," I asked her, "where could we find a more suitable room than in my own little house?" Of course, she saw the reasonableness of this. She only said, "I've never been in an hotel, Arnold. It seems so romantic." Romantic! I kissed the little goose. "Dear," I said, "you do not know the meaning of romance."

She snuggled up to me in that soft, boneless way she had. "Will you teach me, Arnold?" she asked.

Teaching was my profession. My daily associates, my colleagues were women. I had read widely concerning the psychology of their sex. Yes, I thought I could teach her.

I put down my pen to stare at this blackboard and think back to our wedding night. No woman ever had a more gentle, a more considerate, a more thought-out wedding night. I could not have given more thought to an examination syllabus than I did to it. I knew the scar masculine abruptness and intemperance leave on a woman's delicate emotions, and I planned accordingly.

An hotel room romantic, indeed! I led my little bride into an upper chamber scented with incense and lit entirely with candles. I made her wait below while I went up and lit the candles, started

the incense burning and set milk to warm on a little electric heater I kept in my room for this purpose.

Ah, what a fairy place it must have seemed to her after the disorder of her home! All neat, orderly, the candlelight fluttering, the incense mounting upward, a single half-opened rosebud on the bedside table. The walls bare except for a picture of my mother (dear woman—how sympathetically you would embrace your boy tonight!) and a very fine reproduction of "The Gleaners." And those little masculine touches in the chamber which are so subtly moving to a young girl accustomed to a virgin's bed: the shaving lotion, the hairbrushes, the forgotten braces dangling from the back of a chair. These breathe of a new way of life beginning.

I led my bride across the threshold and assisted her to recline on the bed. I helped her remove her hat and shoes and took the pins from her coils of honey-coloured hair and chafed her hands. We had had a very fatiguing day, and I was entirely sensible of the emotional as well as physical strain on Jenny. Ah, I cherished her, how I cherished her! That is my comfort now.

I poured out the glass of hot milk for her and bade her drink. "Dear," I told her, "you will find this very relaxing, very soothing."

She had to be taught, step by step. She said, "I already feel rested, Arnold. I don't want the milk."

I explained to her that her natural exhilaration made her unaware of various tensions that existed unconsciously in her body.

She still demurred. "Mary Delaney," she said—a friend of hers from Railway Avenue—"had wine on her wedding night."

"Look who Mary Delaney married," I said. That was enough. She understood quite well that I had not got where I was by wine-drinking.

She looked like a sweet little girl, drinking her glass of milk, her golden eyes fixed on me, her yellow hair falling about her shoulders.

Now I come to what is most rewarding to me in my thinking backwards, most reassuring. I cannot believe that many men have exercised (and in the face of provocation) the restraint I did that night. I caressed my bride, that night, only with my eyes. Before she had slipped into her dainty little nightgown (my gift: I had not wanted my bridal-night illusion shattered by the Railway Avenue conception of a bridal nightdress—something in nude satin, no doubt) I asked my wife to step to and fro a few times between the lighted candles at the far end of the room. I was not disappointed in what I saw, and I think I may say that Jenny felt the sincere adoration, the clinging caress of my eyes upon her undraped maidenlines, a tribute beyond anything which might have been conveyed by a more unbridled demonstration.

Oh, it is a very precious memory! It solaces me now in spite of

everything. Jenny, does not the memory—even now—sweep over you—remind you?

She was charmingly shy, hesitant, confused. Anything else would have been most unseemly, of course. The violet haze from the incense poured upwards; the candlelight flickered across her—yes, I suppose there is only one word for it—voluptuous figure.

"Arnold," she begged me shyly, hiding herself in the shadows, but I would have none of it. She must have her due. I dropped on my knees. "Look!" I cried—for I knew how appealing playfulness is to the young—"Look, behold your worshipper, your true worshipper! Your husband! Do not deny him, goddess, by refusing to appear."

So little by little I lured her into the full light of the candles, all by gentle persuasion, and still on my knees gave her the crown and flower of every devoted woman's life, a husband's approval. The climax of this little ritual, for such it was, was my presentation to Jenny of the unopened rosebud.

Then, after another glass of warm milk and gentle tuckings-in, I left my little bride. And all night long—I was myself somewhat sleepless after the strain of the day—I awakened to the inexpressible satisfaction of remembering both her presence beneath my sheltering rooftree and my own generous conduct.

The first year was growth—growth for Jenny. Failures, of course, here and there. But in the main, happiness and growth. I took her to my mother's dressmaker and those Railway Avenue sweaters disappeared. They were replaced by simple little frocks embellished with those fulnesses and shirrings (I think they are called) which protect the natural exuberances of a woman's physical constitution from outside eyes. Charming, soft little creations that set her apart from the rag-tag and bobtail of womankind.

Little by little I introduced Jenny to the academic circles which are home to me: the Women's Guild, the Study Circle, the Book Club (which is, I admit, a little on the light side). There were setbacks, of course, but steady progress socially.

Jenny seemed a born housewife, a little improvident, but taking, withal, genuine pleasure in the domestic arts. Sometimes I would ask her to make a cake, not so much to allay my sweet tooth as to teach her a little lesson in restraint. I would come home at night and find a large wedge gone, a piece eaten out of hand, warm, from the newly baked cake. I know of no sight more suggestive of a lack of control. When Jenny would pass me a piece of cake at dinner, I would offer not the slightest criticism, simply say, "No, dear. I see my piece is gone. Have yours now, dear. I'll have caught up with you tomorrow night."

She was a very pretty wheedler, but I could be inflexible when her good was at stake. Jenny was sensitive to suggestion : that was one of her endearing (and dangerous, as it turns out) traits. In this last year cakes, uncut, awaited my arrival, and were cut by me at table.

And the fun we had ! All was not study, housekeeping, social growth. There were delicious, intimate moments in the little upper chamber where by candlelight we experienced the blessed innocent merriment of marriage. I cannot but believe it was an ideal union insofar as one partner can make it so. I retrace every step and can find no flaw ; all planned, thought out. All *jolly*.

It is true, Jenny had seemed a little distracted these past few days, but I thought it was her natural reaction to the tension I was experiencing in regard to the fire drill at school. I have the most difficult room, from a disciplinary standpoint, in the school.

Of course it is not to be expected that in a class where the emphasis is on the cultural—the inspirational—that the robot aspects of mere obedience should be high. Nevertheless, it is quite a feather in your cap to get your room out of the building first in these fire drills and I had been at some pains to draw up a detailed scheme for my room's withdrawal and had put in some secret practice.

I had of course confided my hopes and fears to Jenny, and she was quite aware of the edgy time through which I was passing.

The drill was set for today—Jenny's birthday, as fate would have it. I lay a little late in bed, relaxing, drawing up unto myself help from sources deep in the unconscious. Just as I had reached a stage of equipoise, in burst Jenny, scantily clothed and impetuous in that rather coarse way I was hoping she had conquered.

She threw her arms about my neck very boisterously, pressed her cheek to mine and said, " You do love me, don't you, Arnold ? You do need me."

I thought the shoe decidedly on the other foot—but supposed she was perhaps a little over-stimulated by her birthday. However, my plans for that were all laid so I simply said, " I do indeed, dear." She was very demonstrative, however. Looking back, I can now better understand her agitation—for it amounted to that.

Still I said or did nothing untoward. I simply reminded her of the thoughtlessness of her action. " This is unlike you, Jenny," I said. " It isn't as if I didn't confide in you. You know what day this is, how important it is that I conserve all my nervous energy. And yet it would seem you set out deliberately to jangle my nerves."

She took my remark in the way it was offered and went off to dress and prepare breakfast. While I ate she hunted for her birthday presents. I had planned (in spite of my pre-occupation at school) the usual festivities for Jenny's birthday. This time I had chosen all

tiny objects, little miniatures for gifts, the small things that are so naturally affecting to a woman, and I had hidden them in various unlikely places about the kitchen. As I ate I played the game with her, calling out " hot " or " cold," as we did in playing " Hunt the Thimble " when children. It was all very childlike and real, very warm and human. Jenny found a number of her gifts—but the last, quite the funniest I thought, a miniature baby's bottle (symbolizing her youth) which I had buried deep in the sugar jar, she could not find.

Suddenly she faced the wall and in a very melodramatic way (Railway Avenue continued to creep out now and then) she lifted her hands above her head and actually beat the wall.

" No more ! " she cried. " I'm not going to hunt any more. This finishes it. I've finished hunting for things."

I concluded she was a little over-wrought by the excitement of the celebration. Nevertheless, I was disturbed to see her growing lack of concern for others.

" Jenny," I said, " you're forgetting the ordeal that faces me today."

" No," she said obstinately. " I'm not forgetting anything." Vacillation in matters of this kind is fatal when dealing with women or children, so I remarked quite firmly, " We'll hunt again when I get home tonight."

There was no further conversation, as time was pressing and I had only a few seconds left in which to write the day's motto on the board, the dying words of noble Cecil Rhodes: *So little done, so much to do.*

There they still stand—their nobility, their clarion call to duty expunged by the banal exclamation written beneath them in a brutal, undeveloped male hand: " You're telling me, brother ! "

Brother indeed ! The man who penned that familiar vulgarity shares scarcely the relationship of genus with me. Beneath his scrawl, Jenny's " Goodbye, Arnold," is pitiful but refined.

So—poor Jenny ! I do not suppose this will last. After what Jenny has experienced here, an affair of this kind will quickly pall.

I have learned my lesson, however, and shall be adamant in the face of any pleas from her. I am, after all, a professional man and cannot have my emotional energy thus frittered away. My room finished second in the drill today. There is not the slightest reason why (freed from distractions) it should not head the list next month.

* * *

It was very good of God to let Carlyle and Mrs. Carlyle marry one another and so make only two people miserable instead of four, besides being very amusing. SAMUEL BUTLER, *In a letter*, 1884

THE JUDAS GOOSE

You couldn't eat a creature that had a soul

by WINIFRED VAN ETTEN

IT was old Joe Diemouth who told me the story of the goose Judas, and it was a story I always remembered, chiefly at first because it was so different from most of Joe's stories—no adventures or dangers or heroism on his part, none of the atmosphere of mighty hunter that first made me, a lad in the gun-worshipping stage, the old man's satellite. And in later years I have remembered it because of its own peculiar quality of somehow epitomizing a kind of life that has disappeared for ever.

As I look back now, I realize that my own boyhood days bore the last imprints of that disappearing life, and there is in me still a sense of continuity with it strong enough to turn me homesick when I visit the little town now, with all its brisk and colourless modernity.

Joe was a very old man when I first knew him, but still a hunter. He lived just behind us, and sometimes I would rouse vaguely out of sleep and hear a rattletrap buggy leaving Joe's yard and would know that he was up in the cold and dark of three o'clock to go hunting. He would stand for hours in ice water above his knees to get a shot at a wild duck. He nearly drove his daughter and his granddaughters crazy; and, of course, he did finally get himself pneumonia, and they all thought he'd die. He fooled them, though, but after that he had to take his hunting out in talk. He showed me how to build traps and told me stories of the great dogs he'd owned and his adventures with them, explained every trophy that decorated his walls—the mounted fish, and the buffalo and moose horns and antlers that hung on every wall of his cottage home.

His wife, passionately neat, had antimacassars—two or three or half a dozen of them—on every piece of her gold plush furniture. Old Joe couldn't do anything with her when it came to tidies. He himself seemed almost as incongruous in that stuffed and dusted little place. Even with his infirmities, Joe belonged outside, with the marshes and wild things, not in with the tidies and canaries. How Joe despised those canaries! He would tell me about his

goose Judas, his voice raised over the inconsequential twitterings of those contemptibly tame and useless canaries—caged things, content to be caged.

At the time he had Judas, when he was a young man with a young family, Joe lived on a farm about ten miles from town. Ten miles were ten miles in those days, and a farmer had to be a self-sufficient person. There could be no running into town to buy a loaf of bread if the wife found she was out just ten minutes before dinner. Joe was a hunter not only because he liked to hunt but because he had to. Ducks and wild geese were plentiful and furnished about the only fresh meat the family got. About thirty rods from the farmhouse was a slough. You can drive all over north-west Iowa now without seeing a slough—all the water has been drained off—but in those days farmers simply farmed round the sloughs, and there were acres and acres that were too swampy to cultivate at all. The wild ducks and geese loved Joe's slough, and they hadn't learned yet to be wary. His little girls loved the slough, too, and so did Joe, who spent a lot of time prowling round there. One day he found a wild goose's nest and brought the eggs home with him to put under a hen. Out of three goslings hatched, two were ganders, and as soon as they were large enough they were killed and eaten. But the one was a goose, and Joe made up his mind to raise it for a decoy.

At first the wild goose was just another fowl round the barnyard. It was months before anyone gave her a name, and then it wasn't a very nice name the goose got for herself. "Judas" they called her, and it didn't seem right, both because she was a lady and because by that time they were all fond of her, and you don't call any creature you are fond of "Judas." But Judas it was, because she had earned her title and it was all too appropriate.

By the time she had acquired her name she had also become a great pet of all the family, but particularly of Joe. She used to follow him about wherever he went, coaxing for extra food and for attention. She loved to be petted, and if she caught Joe sitting down anywhere she'd come up to him and nuzzle him like a dog wanting caresses. She was a pretty thing, and it gave her endless pleasure to have her long dark throat stroked gently. She'd bend her head down and make little singing sounds of satisfaction just as long as anyone would keep on petting her. The children loved her. Joe's littlest girl used to take Judas's dark head in her hand and softly stroke the pretty arrangements of feathers on neck and body, fingering the white muffler round the throat and ruffling the plumage to see it fall once more into its delicate design.

They clipped her wings so that she couldn't fly away, but it would scarcely have been necessary, for Judas showed no inclination

to leave her home. She was far tamer than any of the domestic flock; lovely to look at, and so intelligent that it seemed impolite to refer to her as a goose.

The thing that got Judas her name was her extraordinary attitude towards her duties as a decoy. She seemed to know what it was all about, to realize what her function was, and to take an unnatural kind of pleasure in it. There was nothing of the ignorant cat's-paw about Judas. She knew she was supposed to call down other wild geese out of the sky in order that Joe could shoot them. She did it knowingly and deliberately. It was fantastic to see her. She and Joe worked together like a couple of sportsmen, or a sportsman and his best loved dog, and the slough was their hunting ground. It was a favourite resort for Judas at all times, and the brush that surrounded it made excellent cover for Joe and his gun.

In the spring and autumn, when the wild geese were honking overhead, Judas played her siren part to perfection. Paddling round on the pond, she sent her lonely call skyward and lured her tribesmen down to doom. She seemed to exult in her powers and liked to show them off under less favourable conditions than the pond provided her. Often and often she would stand in the farmyard, only a few feet from the door of the house, and call down a gander for Joe, lurking in the doorway, to shoot.

You might have thought she was just lonely, calling for a companion, and too stupid to realize what was going to happen to any bird she brought down to join her. But her conduct when Joe's gun had done its work left no room for such a charitable supposition. Judas clearly enjoyed seeing other geese shot. When a gander crumpled into a soft heap beside her she jumped up and down in her joy. She did a victory dance about the body, and when Joe approached to pick it up she stretched out her neck to him and discussed the kill in low, well pleased tones of voice. She definitely knew what that gun meant, for whenever Joe appeared with it on his arm she followed, noisy with excitement and anticipating the sport with all the eagerness of a hunting dog.

There was something a little dreadful about Judas, a little preposterous—something chilling. She was, really, a detestable fowl if one considered her from the aspect of her relationship to her own kindred. But, considered from a human point of view, she was a pet and a loyal helper. Perhaps there was something a little touching about her preference of her human friends to her own kind—a betrayer appears noble if he had done his betraying out of loyalty to you.

Judas was about three years old when she began to show a change of heart towards her own race. It was early spring, and the wild

geese were thick in the swamp. Joe got all he wanted, and Judas exhibited her usual interest in all the proceedings, calling ganders down in the barnyard to be slaughtered, doing her dance and singing her song when they were killed. It was astonishing that Joe was able to get close enough to kill so many of them, but the gander is a gallant fellow, waiting always for the goose to fly first. And Judas, of course, never flew.

Then, gradually, Joe became aware that Judas was not round the barnyard as much as she used to be. The children reported seeing her on the pond, and with her always a young gander. Judas had taken a mate. He never came round the farm buildings at all, and Judas never tried to bring him there. She seemed to realize that that was no place for her beloved. She made her nest in an old strawstack several fields beyond the house, where the children discovered her devotedly tending her eggs.

The gander wasn't about much in the daytime, now, but every morning he came to the pond and called until Judas left her nest and went to the water for a swim with him. He seemed to be trying to get her to go away. Often he flew a short distance and anxiously called, and Judas as anxiously answered. But she couldn't fly far on account of her clipped wings; and, besides, she had her eggs to tend. So she stayed, and the gander stayed with her.

They were pretty to see together as they took their morning swim, often side by side like a well married pair talking over domestic affairs. Then, again, they would have one of their worried discussions of going away, the gander flying and calling, and Judas explaining and explaining why it was that she couldn't go. He never seemed to understand that Judas couldn't fly. He put on many a demonstration for her; and then she would try, but was able, of course, to rise only a few feet in the air. Her lover never gave up. He seemed to feel that in due time he would be able to teach this strange bride of his all she needed to know for the long, strong flight his heart demanded for him and for her.

Joe got worried about this love affair of Judas. Sooner or later, he thought, the mate would win. Judas's wings would grow, and she was getting shyer and shyer of human beings. The gander must have been telling her with masculine positiveness that no good could come of her association with them, for it was almost impossible now to catch her.

Joe decided he would have to kill the gander. He couldn't allow such a valuable decoy as Judas to be wooed away from him, and he was sure that was going to happen. The little girls cried when he said he was going to shoot the gander; they kept hoping that he would become tame, too, and they liked the idea of having the pair of them about. They liked the idea of Judas's being happy

with a mate. Joe was sure it wouldn't work. The gander wouldn't tame in the first place, and even if he did he doubted if Judas would be useful as a decoy as long as he was about. So Joe made up his mind to kill him.

Joe Diemouth forgot all about what a glorious sport hunting was when he came to this part of his tale. I don't know how many times I heard the story of Judas, but every time when Joe told how he had made up his mind to kill the gander, he almost cried. His weather-beaten little face crinkled up and his bright old eyes grew misty. He couldn't see now how he'd ever had the heart to do it. A wild goose was a pretty, graceful thing, a gallant thing ready to give its life for its mate. It was a treat, now, merely to get a look at one. Old Joe would willingly sit up to his neck in a slough just to see one zooming towards him. He wouldn't ask for a shot at it. He wouldn't even want to shoot it. But in those days wild fowl of all descriptions were so plentiful that it never occurred to Joe to think of them except in terms of something to be shot if possible. Still, when he came to tell me of the actual shooting of Judas's mate, he always looked guilty, and he didn't like the telling of that part of his story.

It was a late spring that year, a tantalizing procrastinating spring. Just as it began to look as if winter were actually routed, just as the sun began to have some real warmth in it and the green blush on the rolling prairies was more than a hallucination caused by wishing for green in a grey world, there'd come a hard freeze and discourage everything for another two weeks. The family got up one morning as cold as they had been any time that winter, it seemed, and found everything frozen up. The little pond had half an inch of ice.

Joe was in a bad temper over this setback, and when he saw Judas's mate come down to the pond he decided it was a good time to do away with him. Besides, Judas wasn't about, and Joe, in spite of her antics with other geese, didn't quite like the idea of killing her mate while she looked on. He went back to the house and got his gun. Then he attempted to creep close enough to the pond to shoot the visitor. But the gander was cautious. A dozen times Joe tried for a shot at him, but each time he made off. Joe was getting irritated. Finally he chanced a shot, which went wild and left the gander flying overhead in circles and making it perfectly apparent that he knew exactly where Joe was ambushed.

Joe was crouched in the brush, cursing, angry enough by this time to kill the bird with a good heart. And then he saw Judas. She was coming down to the pond in a tearing hurry. It seemed almost as if, having heard that one shot—and knowing well what a shot was likely to mean—she'd left her nest and come rushing to

investigate. Joe kept very quiet. All right, let her bring her mate down as she'd brought so many others. He was determined by this time to get that gander.

Judas came out on the ice and called anxiously. She marched about, peering and plaintively inquiring. And her lover answered that cry. Down he came. He lit beside her on the ice and pushed her about a bit with his body and neck. It seemed almost as if he were trying to get between her and Joe. She, glad to see him, stretched out her neck to him and talked. He kept nudging her about, in great anxiety, but he couldn't make it clear to her what he wanted. He flew a little, coaxing, and Judas this time did her best to follow, but her wings weren't equal yet to flight, in spite of the fact that Joe hadn't been able for some time to catch her and clip them. So the gander came back to the ice beside her. He stood in front of her and turned his head in the direction of Joe's cover. Joe took aim, and just as he pulled the trigger it seemed to him that the gander raised his head up haughtily, disdaining or defying death. The next instant he was a heap of wind-ruffled feathers on the ice.

"I never felt so lowdown in my life," old Joe told me. He felt so terrible the instant he had pulled that trigger that he stayed in the cover for a long time afterwards. He had a feeling that he didn't want Judas to see him.

It was like the time when he'd had to kill his favourite hound because he'd got so old and ill and deaf. He had to be killed for pity's sake; and Joe couldn't bear to turn him over to someone else, perhaps clumsy, to kill. It was up to him to do it himself. The hound was so deaf he thought he could sneak up on him when he was asleep and get it over, and the old dog would never know what hit him. And he did find the old fellow snoozing in the sun in a position where he could get a sure shot at him. He crept up close, and there wasn't a movement from the hound. He put his gun to his shoulder, took careful aim, and then, just as he fired, the dog looked up—looked directly at his master training a gun on him. And in that last instant of life there was a look in his eyes that haunted old Joe for years. He used to wake up in the night in a cold sweat, seeing the grieved eyes of old War Dance, the best dog he'd ever had.

It was like that when he'd killed Judas's mate, except, in a way, he felt worse—meaner. He'd killed War Dance to keep him from suffering, but he'd killed the gander just because it appealed to him as convenient. Somehow he'd half expected to see Judas jump up and down and express her usual glee when a bird was shot beside her. But she did nothing of the kind. She stayed by the pond for quite a while, looking at her fallen mate, seeming not to under-

stand that he was dead. Then she left the pond reluctantly and went back to her nest.

Joe took the body of the gander and buried it. It didn't seem decent to eat a creature that had stood up and defied death for his mate the way that gander had. Joe could see him, lifting his head haughtily, contemptuously, as he took aim. Old Joe used to mutter something at this point about a soul. He was rather incoherent about it. Joe was never one to deal in abstractions, and he had no churchly phrases in which to express his meaning, but it seemed to me that he was trying to say that Judas's mate had a soul, and you couldn't eat a creature that had a soul. Soul, to old Joe, apparently meant personality. Any living thing that impressed itself on him as having personality, as being an individual, he thought of as having a soul.

I know he believed his hunting dogs went to some kind of special heaven. And for all I know they did. At least, there is something in dogs, and in wild creatures, that seems to express the soul of a place. There's something gone from that country now that it used to have, clearly when old Joe was a young man, faintly but still perceptibly when I was a boy. And I don't believe it's just that intimations of immortality have fled from me because I'm no longer young. It's really gone—something that used to be there. The great prairies have to express themselves today in terms of scraggly villages full of radios and oil-burning furnaces. And what have those things to say of the spirit of the place? The little wild things, driven away now, for ever, said it better because they were in themselves the soul of the marching land and the brooding water. They're gone, now, and the land has lost its voice and lies inarticulate, though the noise of an alien life fills it.

Judas didn't show up again after the death of her mate. Old Joe went to look for her. He found her on her nest, dead. The eggs were cold.

No, she didn't die of a broken heart. Old Joe examined her and found a shot in her. Evidently it had glanced off the ice and struck her, not hard enough to kill her outright, but enough to cause her death. So, said old Joe, he lost his decoy anyway, and he might as well have allowed Judas's mate to live. And, mighty huntsman though I fancied myself to be, I thought so, too.

* * *

No patriot would ever say "My country, right or wrong."
It is like saying "My mother, drunk or sober!"

G. K. CHESTERTON

FIGHTING WORDS

Thrice armed is he that hath his quarrel just,
But ten times armed is he who gets his blow
in first

Oh yesterday the cutting edge drank thirstily and deep,
The upland outlaws ringed us in and herded us as sheep,
They drove us from the stricken field and bayed us into keep ;
But tomorrow,
By the living God, we'll try the game again !

Oh yesterday our little troup was ridden through and through,
Our swaying, tattered pennons fled, a broken, beaten few,
And all a summer afternoon they hunted us and slew ;
But tomorrow,
By the living God, we'll try the game again !

And here upon the turret-top the bale-fire glowers red,
The wake-lights burn and drip about our hacked, disfigured dead,
And many a broken heart is here and many a broken head ;
But tomorrow,
By the living God, we'll try the game again !

JOHN MASEFIELD

Blenheim

The Duke desires the infantry will step out.

JOHN CHURCHILL, DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH,
1650-1722

Current Strategy

The story begins when the heavens and earth were not names and no field was formed not even a marsh. Tiamat, the mistress of misrule, chaos itself, lorded it over the formless world and threatened the very gods . . .

Armed with the thunderbolt, upright in his chariot, with the seven winds in his train Marduk rides out. There is such boasting on either side as properly introduces an oriental duel and the fight begins. The outcome is decisive. He caught the lady in the

net of the winds, directed a wind in her face. Her mouth was unhappily open—probably to have the last word—

> " *The lord spread out his net and caught her,*
> *The storm wind, that was behind, he let loose in her face.*
> *When Tiamat opened her mouth to its widest*
> *He drove in the evil wind, that she could not close her lips.*
> *The terrible winds filled her belly,*
> . . . . .
> *He seized the spear . . .*
> *. . . he pierced her heart.*"

No more strategic fight was ever won with wind for a weapon.

GAIUS GLENN ATKINS,
Procession of the Gods

No Quarrel

The tone of Uncle Jim's voice became urgent and confidential.

" You don't know who you're up against," he said. " It's a kindness I'm doing to warn you. See? I'm just one of those blokes who don't stick at things, see? I don't stick at nuffin."

Mr. Polly's manner became detached and confidential—as though the matter and the speaker interested him greatly, but didn't concern him over much. " What do you think you'll do? " he asked.

" If you don't clear out? "

" Yes."

" *Gaw!* " said Uncle Jim. " You'd better! *'Ere!* "

He gripped Mr. Polly's wrist with a grip of steel, and in an instant Mr. Polly understood the relative quality of their muscles. He breathed, an uninspiring breath, into Mr. Polly's face.

" What *won't* I do," he said, " once I start in on you? "

He paused, and the night about them seemed to be listening. " I'll make a mess of you," he said, in his hoarse whisper. " I'll do you—injuries. I'll 'urt you. I'll kick you ugly, see? I'll 'urt you in 'orrible ways—'orrible ugly ways . . ."

He scrutinised Mr. Polly's face.

" You'll cry," he said, " to see yourself. See? Cry, you will." . . .

He spoke still closelier. " I'll make a gory mess of you. I'll cut bits off you—" He receded a little. " I got no quarrel with *you*," he said.

H. G. WELLS, 1866-1945,
The History of Mr. Polly

S.A.V.E.D.

According to the English narrator, it was the Anglo-Norman movable tower, an engine eighty feet in height and equipped with a drawbridge that finally broke the spirit of the besieged. The account of the assault on the walls with this strange but powerful erection is Cromwellian in its mixture of violence with prayer. The long exhortation addressed to the manipulators of the machine by the priest who accompanied them might have been spoken by Oliver himself. 'Brothers, the work grows hot, the enemy presses . . . Trust in the Lord, and he shall give you the desires of your hearts. Be reconciled again with God, and put on Christ once more . . . Remember the marvellous work of the Lord which he has wrought in you, how he has brought you unharmed over the vast waters and the violent storms, and how he has brought you here, where through the inspiration of the Spirit we have invaded this suburb . . . The enemy will not stand against us, because those whom the error of ignorance of the faith degrades will be struck with difficulty of action . . . Strike your guilty breasts while you await the aid of the Lord. For it will come, it will come . . . I am persuaded that neither famine nor the sword nor tribulation nor distress shall separate us from Christ. Now, being certain of victory, fall upon the enemy . . . Glory be to our Lord Jesus Christ . . . Amen.'

At this the engineers fell on their faces with groans and tears. And so, in a loud voice calling on God for aid, they moved the engine forward. After three days of desperate fighting, with heavy losses on both sides, during which the tower was nearly lost, it was placed within four feet of the wall, and the scaling-bridge thrown out. That was the end: the heroic but beaten and starving infidels laid down their arms and asked for a truce . . .

ROSE MACAULAY, *They Went to Portugal*

Ultimatum

I doe heare from good hands, that you should report, that I should speake very ill favo'red things to you at London concerning my wife—which I doe and will maintaine is a dam'd lye. If you said any such thing I would advise you to eate your words imediately, else—by the livelinge God—I'le crame them downe your throate with my swordc—and that very shortly. If you love yourself, sett your hand to this enclosed, els take what follows. Soe I remain. To serve you. Chaworth.

LORD CHAWORTH,
Letter to Mr. Allsop, August 3, 1668

★*" Young man, energy and initiative, seeks remunerative position "—the advertisement runs familiarly; its solution is not so easy. Ever anxious to assist our readers, we have made some researches into success stories of the past, and find on the whole, that few offer more practical suggestions than this of Hilaire Belloc's. Our author's understanding of man's eternal quest for Mammon is well known to all readers of his "Cautionary Tales"—you remember the young man who, at the cruelly early age of twenty-five, " had to work to keep alive "—? Never, we believe, did he set out with a more acidulated clarity the means whereby a sensible man can gain wealth and position by merely indulging a natural bent—or should we say natural crook?—towards acquisitiveness.*

AL-RAFSAT OR THE KICK

by HILAIRE BELLOC

IN the days of Abd-er-Rahman, who was among the wisest and most glorious of the Commanders of the Faithful, there resided in the City of Baghdad an elderly merchant of such enormous wealth that his lightest expressions of opinion caused the markets of the Euphrates to fluctuate in the most alarming manner.

This merchant, whose name was Mahmoud, had a brother in the middle ranks of Society, a surgeon by profession, and by name El-Hakim. To this brother he had frequently expressed a fixed determination to leave him no wealth of any kind. " It is my opinion," he would say, " that a man's first duty is to his own children, and though I have no children myself, I must observe the general rule." He was fond of dilating upon this subject whenever he came across his relative, and would discover from time to time new and still better reasons for the resolution he had arrived at. His brother received with great courtesy the prospect held out to him by the wealthy merchant; but one day, finding tedious the hundredth repetition of that person's pious but somewhat wearisome resolve, said to him:

" Mahmoud, though it would be a mean and even an impious thing to expect an inheritance from you to any of my seven sons, yet perhaps you will allow these boys to receive from your lips some hint as to the manner in which you have accumulated that great wealth which you now so deservedly enjoy."

"By all means," said Mahmoud, who was ever ready to describe his own talents and success. "Send them round to me tomorrow about the hour the public executions take place before the Palace, for by that time I shall have breakfasted, and shall be ready to receive them."

The Surgeon, with profuse thanks, left his brother and conveyed the good news to the seven boys, who stood in order before him with the respect for parents customary in the Orient, each placed according to his size and gradation from eight to sixteen years of age.

Upon the morrow, therefore, the Surgeon's seven sons, seated gravely upon crossed legs, formed a semicircle at the feet of their revered relative, who, when he had watched them humorously and in silence for some moments, puffing at his great pipe, opened his lips and spoke as follows:

"Your father has wondered, my dear nephews, in what way the fortune I enjoy has been acquired; for in his own honourable but far from lucrative walk of life, sums which are to me but daily trifles appear like the ransoms of kings. To you, his numerous family, it seems of especial advantage that the road to riches should be discovered. Now I will confess to you, my dear boys, that I am quite ignorant of any rule or plan whereby the perishable goods of this world may be rapidly accumulated in the hands of the Faithful. Nay, did any such rule exist, I am persuaded that by this time the knowledge of it would be so widely diffused as to embrace the whole human race. In which case," he added, puffing meditatively at his pipe, "all would cancel out and no result would be achieved; since a great fortune, as I need not inform young people of your sagacity, is hardly to be acquired save at the expense of others.

"But though I cannot give you those rules for which your father was seeking when he sent you hither, I can detail you the steps by which my present affluence was achieved; and each of you, according to his intelligence, will appreciate what sort of accidents may make for the increase of fortune."

"As a boy, my dear nephews," began the kindly uncle, "I was shy, dirty, ignorant, lazy, and wilful. My parents and teachers had but to give me an order for me to conceive at once some plan of disobeying it. All forms of activity save those connected with dissipation were abhorrent to me. So far from reciting with other boys of my age in chorus and without fault the verses of the Koran, I grew up completely ignorant of that work, the most Solemn Name in which I to this day pronounce with an aspirate from an unfamiliarity with its aspect upon the written page. Yet I am glad

to say that I never neglected my religious duties, that I prayed with fervour and regularity, and that I had a singular faith in the loving kindness of my God.

"I had already reached my seventeenth year when my father, who had carefully watched the trend of my nature and the use to which I had put my faculties, addressed me as follows:

"'Mahmoud, I wish you no ill. I have so far fed and clothed you because the Caliph (whom Allah preserve!) has caused those who neglect their younger offspring to be severely beaten upon the soles of their feet. It is now my intention to send you about your business. I propose'—and here my dear father pulled out a small purse—'to give you the smallest sum compatible with my own interests, so that if any harm befall you, the vigilant officers of the Crown cannot ascribe your disaster to my neglect. I request that you will walk in any direction you choose so only that it be in a straight line away from my doors. If, when this your patrimony is spent, you make away with yourself I shall hold you to blame; I shall be better pleased to hear that you have sold yourself into slavery or in some other way provided for your continued sustenance. But what I should like best would be never to hear of you again!' With those words my father, seizing me by the shoulders, turned my back to his doors and thrust me forth with a hearty kick, the better to emphasize his meaning.

"Thus was I launched out in the dawn of manhood to try my adventures with the world.

"I discovered in my pouch as I set out along the streets of the city the sum of 100 dinars, with which my thoughtful parent had provided me under legal compulsion. 'With so large a capital,' said I to myself, 'I can exist for several days, indulge my favourite forms of dissipation, and when they are well spent it will be time enough to think of some experiment whereby to replace them.'"

Here the eldest nephew said respectfully and with an inclination of the head: "Pray, uncle, what is a dinar?"

"My dear lad," replied the merchant with a merry laugh, "I confess that to a man of my position a reply to your question is impossible. I could only tell you that it is a coin of considerable value to the impoverished, but to men like myself a denomination so inferior as to be indistinguishable from all other coins."

Having so expressed himself the worthy merchant resumed the thread of his tale;

"I had, I say, started forward in high spirits to the sound of the coins jingling in my pouch, when my steps happened to take me to the water-side, where I found a ship about to sail for the Persian Gulf. 'Here,' said I to myself, 'is an excellent opportunity

for travelling and for seeing the world.'

"The heat of the day was rising. No one was about but two watermen, who lay dozing upon the bank. I nimbly stepped aboard and hid myself behind one of the bales of goods with which the deck was packed. When the sun declined and work was resumed, the sailors tramped aboard, the sail was hoisted, and we started upon our journey.

"Befriended by the darkness of night I crept out quietly from my hiding place and found a man watching over the prow, where he was deputed to try the depth of the water from time to time with a long pole. I affected an air of authority, and told him that the Captain had sent me forward to deliver his commands, which were that he should give me a flask of wine, some fruit, and a cake (for I guessed that like all sailors he had in his possession things both lawful and unlawful). These I told him I would take to my relative the Captain. He left me with the pole for a moment and soon returned with the provisions, with which I crept back to my hiding place, and there heartily consumed them.

"During the whole of the next day I lay sleeping behind the bales of goods. With the fall of the second night I needed a second meal. I dared not repeat my first experiment, and lay musing till, hunger having sharpened my wits, I hit upon a plan.

"I bethought me that the watchman of either board would have some provision for the night. I remembered a sort of gangway between the high bales upon the main deck, which corridor led back far under the poop into the stern sheets. It had been so designed for the convenience of stowing and unloading, affording a passage for the workmen as they handled the cargo. I put these two things together in my mind (but to God be the glory) and formed of them a plan for immediate execution.

"I crept from my hiding place and sauntered along the dark deck until I came upon the watchman, squatting by the rail and contemplating the stars in the moonless sky. He had, as I had suspected, a white platter which I could just see glimmering against the deck beside him. I thought I also discerned a gourd of wine. I approached him as one of the crew (for they were chance strangers taken on at the wharf). We talked in low tones of such topics as are common to the poor, till, naturally, we came to wine. He cursed the poor quality of his own, in the gourd beside him. I, after some mystery, confided to him that I had a stock of excellent wine, and, as my friendship for him increased, I made a clean breast of it and told him it was in the stern sheets, far under the poop deck along the narrow passage between the high bales. I offered to go with him and fetch it, allowing him, in his eagerness, to go first. When he was well engaged in groping aft I turned, crept

forward again silently and rapidly, picked up the loaf and cheese which I found on his platter, as also the gourd, and vanished into my hiding hole.

"I ate my fill—though somewhat too hurriedly, and remarked how long a time my shipmate was spending at searching that empty place. As I heard him creeping back at last cursing violently in whispers, I was aware of faint dawn in the East, and determined that my cruise must end.

"We were already in the neighbourhood of the sea, as I discovered by tasting the water over the side in the darkness and discovering it to be brackish. I bethought me that my poor comrade had now an excellent reason for ferretting me out, that the Captain also would soon hear of me and that, with daylight, I should certainly be visited with a bastinado or put into chains and sold. I therefore slipped over the side (for I was an excellent swimmer) and made for the shore. There I lay on a warm beach and watched through the reeds the great sail of the ship as it slipped down stream further and further away in the growing light.

"When the sun rose the vessel was out of sight, and looking about me I discovered a little village not far from the shore inhabited by simple fishermen, but containing several houses of some pretension, the residences of wealthy merchants who came here from Bosra in their moments of leisure.

"My first action at the opening of the new day was to fall upon my knees and add to the ritual prayer a humble outpouring of thanks for the benefits I had already received and a fervent appeal for guidance. That appeal was heard. I rose from my knees full of a new-found plan.

"To one of those wealthier houses which stood near the village I at once proceeded and sent in a message by a slave to its owner saying that my master, a wealthy dealer in carpets, solicited the custom of his lordship, and that if the great man would but accompany me to the quay I would there show him wares well worthy of his attention.

"It so happened that this merchant had a passion for a particular sort of carpet which is solely made by the inhabitants of El Kzar, for they alone possess the secret, which they very zealously guard. The slave, therefore, brought me back the message that his master would not be at the pains of accompanying me unless such wares were present for his inspection. If my carpets were those of El Kzar he would willingly inspect them, but if they were of any other brand he was indifferent.

"And let this teach you, my dear nephews, how simple are the minds of the rich.

"I was willing enough that the carpets should be carpets of

El Kzar, or, indeed, of any other place under heaven, for all were at my choice.

"I hastened, therefore, to send back a further message that by a curious coincidence we had upon this occasion nothing else in stock but Kzaran carpets, and begged the slave to emphasize this important point to his master.

"His reply was to twist his right hand, palm upwards, with a strange smile. I pulled out my purse, showed him the shining dinars, and asked him whether he would rather have *one* now for his fee or *five* on the completion of the transaction? With glistening eyes—and even (as I thought) a pathetic gratitude—the slave leapt at the latter offer.

"And let this teach you, my dear nephews, how simple are the minds of the poor.

"He hastened off to deliver my message.

"Within a few moments the master of the house appeared in great haste, and all of a fever bade me lead him to the appointed spot."

As the Merchant Mahmoud pronounced these words the Call to Prayer was heard from a neighbouring tower, and he hurriedly concluded:

"My dear nephews, we are called to prayer. I will cease here to speak and will continue tomorrow the story of Myself and Providence."

Upon hearing these words his seven nephews rose together, and crossed their arms; following which gesture, with three deep bows performed as they walked backwards toward the curtains of the magnificent apartment, they left their uncle's presence.

"You will remember, my dear nephews," said the Merchant Mahmoud when the boys were once more assembled in a half-circle before him with crossed legs and attentive countenances, "that you left me hurrying with the collector of Kzaran carpets towards the quay where he should enjoy the sight of the merchandise. This merchant was reputed among the people of the place to be of singularly cunning and secretive temperament, a character which (you may think it strange!) they admired as though it were the summit of human wisdom. I confess that I found him, in the matter of Kzaran carpets at least, very different from his reputation. A more garrulous old gentleman never trod this earth. He was in a perpetual stammer of excitement, and though I was careful to lead him by the most roundabout roads that he might have time to cool his ardour, the delay did but seem to increase it.

"'I implore you, sir,' he said at last, as one who could no longer restrain some violent passion, 'I implore you, pay no

attention to others in this place who may have attempted to forestall me in the matter of your very valuable cargo. Your honour is, I know, sufficient in the matter . . . I am confident you will give me a free market. Also, they know nothing of Kzaran carpets in these parts: they are mere buyers and sellers . . . and on what a margin! Let me tell you in your ear that while many men in this place carry on the appearance of riches, most are indebted to Parsees in the capital. I alone am in an independent position and' (here he whispered) 'I can well reward you *privately* and *in your own pocket* for any favour you may show me.'

"Seeing him so eager, I affected a certain hesitation and embarrassment, and at last confessed that I had been approached by a local merchant whose name I was forbidden to mention and who had very kindly sent me as a present by a slave the sum of 1,000 dinars. To this he had attached no conditions, but he had also, quite independently, sent word that he had himself orders for carpets which he was bound to fulfil. His profit (he had said), if I would give him a first choice, would be so considerable that he would be very ready to offer me a handsome commission on the completion of the bargain; quite apart from the 1,000 dinars which were but a little present from one man to another. 'This thousand dinars,' I added, 'now in my possession, I have accepted. A present is a graceful act and can be taken with a clean conscience. But the *commission* is another matter. I must consider beyond everything the interests of my master. I shall not mention the offer made to me (for with all his confidence in me he is himself a business man and might misunderstand my position), but I shall think it my duty to give him no advice save to sell to the highest bidder.'

"'It is I!' shouted the aged connoisseur eagerly, 'it is I who will prove the highest bidder! Nay, my dear fellow, since such bargains are often concluded in private, would it not be better to tell your master forthwith that no possible competitor can stand against me in this place? Let him first discover the sum offered by my rival and I give you leave to suggest a sum larger by one tenth, which shall decide his judgment. Meanwhile,' he added, 'two thousand dinars are but a small present for one in your position and I shall willingly—joyfully—propose to give you that sum, not for a moment on account of the service which I am certain you design to do me, but purely as an expression of my esteem.'

"His excitement had now so risen that I fear his judgment was lost. Already he saw before him in his mind's eye a pile of the noblest Kzaran carpets, all ready for the caravan. Already he saw a rival calmly acquiring them on the distant wharf, the witnesses placing their seals, the words of completion.

"He trembled as again he urged on me the little gift, the little personal, trifling gift of 2,000 dinars.

"'Sir,' said I in reply, a little stiffly, 'I am not accustomed to take secret commissions under any disguise. My duty is clear: if I cannot receive a firm offer superior to that already made me, and that backed with proof that you are indeed, as you say, the most solid man in the place—then I must close with my first client. If indeed I were certain of an immediate payment in a larger sum I would accept your proposal. But how can I know anything of this place? The thousand dinars of which I spoke are coined and in a wallet; I have them safe. With all the respect due to your age, I have no information upon your credit in this town. And I confess,' I added in another tone, 'that I *am* acquainted with your rival's position, which is perhaps more solid than you think. I confess I think it would be simpler and to the better interest of our house if I were to go straight to him now and have done with it.'

"As I spoke thus the old man lost all reason. It was piteous to see one of his age and venerable hairs dancing and spluttering with excitement. He shook his fists in the air; he called to Heaven in shrill tones, he betrayed all the frenzy of the collector. He contrasted the mercantile motives of the unknown competitor with his own passion for Pure Art. He called Heaven to witness to the reality of his wealth, and at last in a sort of fury tore from his garments the jewels which ornamented them, thrust into my hand all the cash upon his person (it was in a leather bag, and amounted altogether to no more than 500 dinars), added to this a brooch of gold, which he dragged from his scarf, and said that if this instalment were not sufficient proof of his good faith and credit he knew not how to move me.

"I shrugged my shoulders and suggested that instead of making so violent a protestation and at such risk to his fortune he should go back soberly to his house and return with an instrument of credit and two witnesses (as the law demands), while I awaited him patiently at that spot. I, at least, was in no haste and would honourably abide his return. He was off at a speed which I should never have thought possible at his age.

"I waited until he had turned the corner of a distant hedge of prickly pears, and not until he was quite out of sight did I gather the jewels, the coins, and the precious ornaments which in his haste he had thrown at my feet, and very rapidly betake myself in the opposite direction.

"Never was the Mercy of Allah more evidently extended. The plain was naked outside the town, the river perhaps a mile distant; my plight, as it might appear, desperate. I pinned the

gold brooch to my cloak, I distributed the jewels openly upon various parts of my person, and I proceeded at a smart pace over the open plain towards the river. It was with the greatest joy that I found upon its bank two fishermen about to set sail and proceed down stream to sea. Their presence inspired me with a plan for escape.

"I chatted negligently with them (still keeping one eye upon the distant house of my aged but excitable friend). At last with a light laugh I offered one of them a piece of gold, saying I should be pleased to try the novel experience of a little cruise. The fisherman, who was quite unacquainted with so much wealth, and seemed somewhat awestruck, gave me some grand title or other, and promised me very good sport with the fish and a novel entertainment. But even as he and his companion pushed out from shore I turned in my seat on the deck and perceived in the plain a rising dust which betrayed the approach of the merchant with his witnesses and a company of his slaves.

"Suddenly changing my expression from one of pleased though wearied expectancy to one of acute alarm, I shouted to my new companions: 'Push away for your lives and stretch your sail to its utmost! These are the Commissioners sent by the Caliph to re-assess and tax all fishing boats upon a new valuation! Already had they seized three upon the beach when I left and found you here!

"At these words the worthy fellows were inspired by a fear even greater than my own. They manfully pushed into the swiftest part of the current, and, though a smart breeze was blowing, hoisted every inch of the sail, so that the boat ran with her gunwale upon the very edge of the water and was indeed dangerously pressed. But I had the satisfaction of seeing the merchant and his retinue vainly descending the river bank, at perhaps one-half our speed, calling down curses upon us, threatening with their fists, shouting their public titles of authority, their menaces of the law, and in every way confirming my excellent pair of fishermen in the story I had told them.

"It was a pleasant thing to loll on deck under the heat of the day, toying with the valuable ornaments I had so recently acquired and lazily watching my companions as they sweated at the halyards, or alternatively glancing along towards the shore at the little group of disappointed people which fell so rapidly behind us as we bowled down the tide. Soon their features were no longer plain; then their figures could scarcely be distinguished. The last impression conveyed to me was of some little very distant thing, stamping with impotent rage and shaking wild arms against the sky. I could not but deplore so grievous a lapse in dignity in one so venerable.

"When we were well away from the neighbourhood of the city I asked the fishermen whither they were bound; to which they answered that their business was only to cruise about outside and fish during the night, returning at dawn with their catch, 'Would it not be better,' I suggested, 'seeing that these rapacious fellows will hang about for a day or so, to carry me to some town of your acquaintance along the coast where the reigning powers do not suffer from the tyranny of Baghdad? For my part I am free to travel where I will, and the prospect of a change pleases me. I shall be happy,' said I, 'to reward the sacrifice of your catch with fifty dinars.'

"At the prospect of much further wealth the fishermen were at once convinced: they sang in the lightness of their hearts, and for three days and three nights we sped down the Gulf, passing bleak mountains and deserted rocky promontories, until upon the fourth day we came to a town the like of which I had never seen.

"'Shall we land here?' said I.

"'No,' said the fishermen, 'for it is in a manner within the Caliph's dominions, and perhaps that accursed tax of which you spoke will be levied here also.'

"'You know better than I,' replied I thoughtfully, standing for a moment in affected perplexity. 'Let me, however, land in your little boat. I will come out to you again after the hour of the mid-day prayers, while you stand in the offing.'

"To this arrangement they readily consented. I rowed to the land, and when I had reached the shore I was pleased to see my fearful hosts quite three miles out upon the hot and shimmering sea. Gazing at them I hope with charity, and certainly with interest, I pushed the little boat adrift (for I had no reason to return to those poor people) and made my way inland. I disposed of my jewellery at prices neither low nor high with local merchants. I preserved the old fellow's golden brooch, which I imagined (for I am a trifle weak and superstitious) might bring me good fortune, and when all my transactions were accomplished I counted my total capital, and found myself in possession of no less than 1,500 dinars. The cold of the evening had come by the time my accounts were settled and the strings of my pouch were drawn. I set myself under an arbour where a delicious fountain played in the light of the setting sun, which shone over the waters of the sea, and drinking some local beverage the name of which I knew not, but the taste and effect of which were equally pleasing, I reflected upon my increase of fortune.

"'You left home, Mahmoud,' said I to myself, 'with one hundred dinars, of which your excellent and careful father deprived himself rather than see you face the world unarmed, or himself

receive the bastinado. You have been gone from home a week: you are perhaps some 800 miles from your native city; your capital has been multiplied fifteen-fold, and so far you may look with an eager courage towards the further adventures of your life, for very clearly the Mercy of Allah is upon you.' "

At this moment a nasal hooting from the neighbouring turret warned the company to turn their thoughts to heaven. The boys, who had sat fascinated by their uncle's recital, knew that the end of their entertainment had come. The second son of the Surgeon was therefore impatient to exclaim: "But, dear uncle, though we see that a certain chance favoured you and not only your native talents, yet we do not perceive how all this led to any main road to fortune."

"My boy," said the Merchant Mahmoud, pensively stroking his beard and gazing vacuously over the heads of the youngsters, "I do not pretend to unfold you any such plan. I am but retailing you in my humble fashion the steps by which one merchant in this city has been raised by the Infinite Goodness of the Merciful (His name be adored!) from poverty to riches . . . But the call for prayer has already been heard and we must part."

* * *

ANYTHING WILL DO

. . . So take a happy view—
This lawn graced with the candle-flames of crocus,
Frail-handed girls under the flowering chestnut,
Or anything will do
That time takes back before it seems untrue:

And, if the truth were told,
You'd count it luck, perceiving in what shallow
Crevices and few crumbling grains of comfort
Man's joy will seed, his cold
And hardy fingers find an eagle's hold.

C. Day Lewis

FROM HERE TO THERE

"Give me a return ticket, please."
"Where to?"
"Here, of course . . ."

The train : The twelve o'clock for paradise.
Hurry, or it will try to creep away.
Out in the country everyone is wise :
We can be only wise on Saturday.
There you are waiting, little friendly house ;
Those are your chimney-stacks with you between.
Surrounded by old trees and strolling cows,
Staring through all your windows at the green.
Your homely floor is creaking for our trade ;
The smiling tea-pot with contented spout
Thinks of the boiling water, and the bread
Longs for the butter. All their hands are out
To greet us, and the gentle blankets seem
Purring and crooning : "Lie in us, and dream."

HAROLD MONRO

Tradition of Singular Virtue

Before the open door two girls were laughing and talking.

The elder was standing wrapped in a big blue-fringed material, knotted under her arms and falling to her knees. Her great mass of black hair was divided into thousands of little hard thin plaits, which closely framed a face with shining eyes and thick lips, and fell over her delicate square shoulders. She was swinging her legs over a low gate, laughing and shaking her head.

The younger was naked, for she was almost a child. She was squatting on her heels, her head between her knees, placing little yellow flowers between each toe.

Bion watched them with interest . . .

The master of the house took a few steps in the dark, saying in loud voice :

"Welcome ! Enter my house."

They entered, and lit the terra cotta lamps.

"Here is water, bread and fruit," said the Ethiopian.

When they had finished their meal, the host rose ; "It is time to retire to our beds. I know the duties of hospitality. Here are my two daughters. The younger has never yet known a man, but she is old enough. Go take your pleasure with her."

Bion was not ignorant of this custom, and venerated it as a tradition of singular virtue. The gods often visit the earth in the guise

of travellers, soldiers, or shepherds, and who could tell a mortal from an Olympian who wishes to be nameless? Perhaps Bion was Hermes? Knowing that to refuse would be taken as an insult, he was neither shocked nor surprised when the elder leaned over him and uncovered her young breasts for him to kiss.

Without speaking, without moving, the child watched their intrigue, with her head bent forward, her hands thrown back as in a dream. After a moment, pale and trembling, and ready to weep, she rushed out of the open door. The night closed about her. Then the father, raising his arms, walked to the threshold and gazed into the heavy darkness, where his daughter had carried away for ever the lost honour of his house.

PIERRE LOUŸS, *Twilight of the Nymphs*,
Translated by PHILLIS DUVEEN

The Reason Why

Like all men in all places,

Some went from love of glory,
Some went who were restless and curious,
Some were rapacious and lustful.
Many left their bodies to the kites of Syria
Or sea-strewn along the routes;
Many left their souls in Syria,
Living on, sunk in moral corruption;
Many came back well broken,
Diseased and beggared, finding
A stranger at the door in possession;
Came home cracked by the Sun of the East
And the seven deadly sins in Syria.

THOMAS STEARNS ELIOT, *from The Rock*

No Prize Offered

Every Time-travelling field of presentation is contained within a field one dimension larger, travelling in another dimension of Time, the larger field covering events which are 'past' and 'future', as well as 'present', to the smaller field. . . .

The serialism of the fields of presentation involves the existence of a serial observer. In this respect every time-travelling field is the field apparent to a similarly travelling and similarly dimensioned observer. Observation by any such observer is observation by all observers pertaining to the dimensionally larger fields.

J. W. DUNNE: *An Experiment With Time*, 1927

Rendez-Vous

The grey sea and the long black land ;
And the yellow half-moon large and low ;
And the startled little waves that leap
In fiery ringlets from their sleep,
As I gain the cove with pushing prow,
And quench its speed in the slushy sand.

Then a mile of warm sea-scented beach ;
Three fields to cross till a farm appears ;
A tap at the pane, the quick sharp scratch
And blue spurt of a lighted match,
And a voice less loud, thro' its joys and fears,
Than the two hearts beating each to each.

ROBERT BROWNING, 1812-1889

Traveller's Joy

Crammed full of passengers—three fat, fusty old men—a young mother and a sick child—a cross old maid—a poll parrot—a bag of red herrings—a double barrelled gun (which you are afraid is loaded) and a snarling lap dog, in addition to yourself awaking out of a sound nap, with a cramp in one leg and the other in a lady's band-box—pay the damages (four or five shillings) for 'gallantry's sake'—getting out in the dark at the half-way house, in the hurry stepping into the return coach, and finding yourself the next morning at the very spot you had started from the evening before—not a breath of fresh air—asthmatic old man—and child with measles—windows closed in consequence—pay the coachman and drop a piece of gold in the straw—not to be found—fell through a crevice—coachman says "He'll find it"—can't get out yourself—gone—picked up by the 'ostler—no time for 'blowing up'—coach off for the next stage—lose your money—get in—lost your seat—stuck in middle—get laughed at—lose your temper—turn sulky, and turned over in a horse pond.

William Hone's Year Book, 1827

Journey's End

Here comes my lover tripping like a roe
And brings my longings tangled in her hair—

GEORGE PEELE, 1558-1597

CASE FOR THE CROWN

" The Lord have mercy on me," Harry said, " I am eight years old and a sinner "

by NEIL PATERSON

IT was Harry got the picture. At school. The earth was too hard to work in winter and so Harry was goin' to school, and big Andra Jamieson he had the picture. He was allowed books with pictures in his house; he had hundreds, he said, mebbe thousands. He had this picture down the leg of his pants and Harry said, " Give us it." Harry said he said, " Please Andra." " You don't have to beg," Andra said. " It's yourn." And he gave Harry the picture and Harry took me down past the clearing to the hemlocks and showed me.

" Mutts," I said.

" No," Harry said. " Dawgs. These are English setter dogs and mighty rare. Real dawgs."

We looked at the picture. There was two dawgs. One was settin' on his backside and one was on his four legs. The one that was settin' was squintin' up at the one that was standin' an' he was tongue out and rarin to go. I guess he was grinnin' straight at me. He was the dawg I liked the best of them.

" They're red dawgs," Harry said, " and their picture was took for sellin'. Anybody wants them dawgs he can have them, it says, for twenty-five dollars apiece."

" Is twenty-five dollars a deal of money, Harry? " I asked.

" Twenty-five dollars," Harry said. " Ah yes."

We looked at the picture for a long time and Harry let me hold it.

" Ain't none of the kids in the whole of Canada belongs a pair of two dawgs like this," Harry said. " I aim to call mine Rover. What you goin' to call yours, Dave? "

" I was aimin' to call mine Rover too," I said.

We had a hide-out Harry built down there in the hemlocks at the edge of the water. There was no wet settin' on account of the canoe birch we laid down in strips for floor. We set on the floor of our own two's secret house and looked for a long, long time at the picture of the red dawgs. They sure was pretty.

" There's gran'ma hollerin'," Harry said at last.

"I don't hear her."

"You never hear," Harry said. "Come on." He folded the picture and put it in his pocket, and we rolled up my trousers so as my gran'ma would not see the ends was wet and say, "You been down by the hemlocks again," and then we went on up for our grub.

"Do you know where I aim to hide this picture?" Harry said.

"No," I said.

"In my grandaddy's boots."

I looked into Harry's eyes to see what he meant, and I saw that Harry meant what he said.

"But Harry," I said. It was no use. Harry could speak faster'n me and I never yet talked him into any thing or out of any other thing. Harry was eight and smart, and I was just six.

"No other place," Harry said, his mind was made up. "Grandaddy's boots."

I thought of my grandaddy's boots and of my grandaddy. I had a bad stomach, thinkin'. "I wouldn't, Harry," I said.

"Safest place," Harry said. "My grandaddy has been to the convention and his boots is oiled and on the shelf. Come the Spring my grandaddy will put on his boots and go down to the Houses again, but till the Spring there will be no comin' and goin' among people and no need for the boots and no sich safe place in all the house as the insides of them. You take it from me, Dave," Harry said.

I shook my head. I didn't like it at all. I knew it was two sins. It was a sin to have a picture in the house, and it was a sin to touch my grandaddy's boots. My grandaddy was death on sin. He had eyes sharp as a woodcock for wrong-doin', and when he saw a sin he raised his voice to Heaven and said so, and if it was us had done the sins he took us into the wood-shed and beat us. Once he beat Harry justly till he bled.

My grandaddy was a just and terrible man. He was bigger'n anybody's door I ever seen except our own, and he'd a been bigger'n ourn too if it hadn't been he built the hole to fit hisself. He was thick as two town men put together and he had a black beard shaped like a spade that he could 'a dusted the crumbs off the table with by noddin' his head if he had had a mind to, which he didn't.

He could not write except for J. Mackenzie, his mark, and he could not read, only some capital letters and the names of God and Jesus and numbers up to 793 which is the end of the Bible, Amen, and he had not any yap like the village men, but Conventions) when he sat down, Harry said the place where he sat

became the top of the table and men pointed their talk at him and kept their traps shut when he opened his. He was a true Christian. He knew God's will, and wreaked it on us.

His boots was the best of all the things my grandaddy had, nobody had their like. They was fifteen years old, and he was famed for them. The folks down at the Houses had an idea he wore them boots ev'ry day of the year, and they rated him high, Harry said, for this. Folks never guessed that he carried the boots to the outside of the village and put them on behind a tree. Folks did not know that when they came visitin' mebbe once, twice a year, my gran'ma spied them in the valley and beat on the gong and my grandaddy would come runnin' to get shod before the company arrived. They was black beautiful boots; none of us was ever let touch them, and there was Harry aimin' to hide a picture in them and pictures was agin God and so was a finger on the boots, and my stomach was jest plain draggin' itself up the track to our house.

My grandaddy was not in the house. You could kinda smell when my grandaddy was in and when he wasn't, not sniff-sniff with your nose, not that kind of a smell, but you could jest smell the nice slack feel of the house.

"Where's my grandaddy?" Harry asked.

"Outside," my gran'ma said. "Now go and git washed, and hurry, and Davy, you scour them hands. Harry, see he does it."

We came in cleaned and knelt down at our chairs.

"Lord," Harry said, "Father chart hum hum bout to receive hum hum blessed portion hum hum hummy umhum day and night. Amen. Gran'ma, whereabouts outside is my grandaddy?"

"Amen, Davy!" my gran'ma said.

"Amen," I said.

"Is he in the wood-shed?" Harry said.

"Now pull your chair up afore you set on to it," my gran'ma said to me. "And never mind the knife. Use that spoon. What was it you was sayin', Harry?"

"I said where's my grandaddy," Harry said.

"He's had *his* meat a half-hour," my gran'ma said.

"But where is he? Davy wants to speak to him."

"Me," I said.

"Your grandaddy is out by the fallen tree," my gran'ma said. "He's amakin' of fish-hooks. Drink up now, Davy."

"Davy aims to ask him for a dawg," Harry said.

I laid down my spoon and stared at Harry.

"Well *I* asked last time," Harry said. "Of course if you're feart to ask."

"I'm not feart," I said.

"Stop gabbin', Davy," my gran'ma said. "Jest let off gabbin' this instant and eat up your meat."

I ate up and drank up. My gran'ma was forever pickin' on me but she had only a little voice—she was small-sized—and meant no harm by it. Although she was small-sized, mind, she was clever. She could weave and, not only, she could read and write, and had spectacles to prove it. She did what my grandaddy said like the rest of us, but once when my grandaddy had me by the pants and there was high words flyin' round my ears my gran'ma spoke a piece on her own, and that time it was my grandaddy did what *she* said.

"Gran'ma," I asked, "why won't grandaddy let us git a dawg?"

"On account of its food," my gran'ma said.

"We could git a little tiny dawg."

"It wouldn't eat but bucket scraps," my brother Harry said. "It would catch all the rats. It'll be a little white rattin' dawg, and we'll call it Rover."

"You'll hev to ask your grandaddy," my gran'ma said. She took the done dish off the table and went to scrape it in the backyard.

"You finished?" Harry asked.

"Near enough," I said.

"Lord," Harry said. I bowed my head. "Lord hum hum thank God. Amen. Amen Dave!"

"Amen," I said. "Harry, I never yet seen a red dawg. Did you, Harry?"

"No," Harry said. "But them's red dawgs, sure enough. It says so in the writing. Now go on and git down to the tree and ask grandaddy."

"Okay," I said. "You comin'?"

"No," Harry said.

I went half across the clearing, then I stopped and looked back. "What'll I say, Harry?" I asked.

"Jest say you want a dawg. Go on. There's nothing to be scared of."

When I had gone a little further Harry shouted, "If he won't let us git a dawg try him for some other kind of crittur."

"What other kind of crittur?" I asked.

"Any kind," Harry said. It was nothing to him. He was kicking stones round the front door, his hands in his pockets. "Hurry up," he said.

My grandaddy had a fire lit down by the tree. He had got horses' nails off old Neil Munro in the Spring. They was the best and softest iron, and my grandaddy knew a way to burn them nails and make them into a steel bar, and then when he had filed a hook

on the end of the bar he cut it off, heated it red hot and tossed it in a bucket of water, and then he picked the hook out of the water and laid it on a hot iron till it was bright blue; and to finish off he dropped it in a fishin'-can full of cannel grease, and it got black then, and when it got black it was finished. It was the best and strongest hook you ever seen.

When I got down to the tree my grandaddy was jest cuttin' a hook off the bar. He had his back to me and I could not see, but I knew that was what he was doin' on account of his arm went in and out like a saw. I thought I would wait till he finished cuttin', so I waited. I walked up close and waited till the hook fell off the bar. My grandaddy had tongs, and he took the hook in the tongs and put it in the fire.

"Grandaddy," I said, "Harry and me wants a dawg."

My grandaddy twisted the hook in the flames and laid it in a red nest in the fire. He had a very black face with the beard, but not his eyes; they were blue and dug right into you.

"Jest even a little Mutt," I said.

"What do you want a dawg for?" my grandaddy said.

I could not tell. I knew that we wanted a dawg better nor anything, but I could not jest think what we wanted it for.

"A dawg is no use," my grandaddy said. "You can't eat a dawg."

I could not think of anything to say. I waited a bit, but there was no more talk from him and nothing more comin' from me, and so I went away.

Harry let off kickin' stones and came to meet me. "Well let's hear it," he said. "What did he say?"

"Said no," I said. "Said you can't eat a dawg."

We walked round to the side of the house without speakin'. We heard my gran'ma come out the front and start hollerin'.

"Wants you," Harry said.

I looked at the sun. It was my bedtime.

"Harry I want to be shook if I'm sleepin'," I said, "an' see them dawgs again. Will you, Harry?"

"All right," Harry said. He put up his hands for shoutin'. "He's comin', Gran'ma!"

I went round the front to my gran'ma.

"Davy," she said, "was it you hid the scrubber again?"

I would have said no, but she had a hard face on. "I think it's settin' up there on the kitchen cupboard, gran'ma," I said.

It was tub night. When I was in the tub I told her about my grandaddy. I told her my grandaddy was set agin a dog.

"Gran'ma," I said, "I don't like my grandaddy."

"Hush," my gran'ma said. "Hush now, that's a terrible thing to say. Everybody likes their grandaddy."

"No," I said. "Gran'ma, Alec Stewart has a grandaddy is on his side."

"Is on his side?" my gran'ma said, and she left off with the towel.

"Is on his side," I said, noddin'. "Alec Stewart's grandaddy is. He told me."

"Your grandaddy sometimes does not always understand young uns," my gran'ma said, "and you are too small a young un to understand grandaddies." She rubbed the skin near off me. "Now get shirted up before I lose patience, and take a great leap into the bed."

I got into the bed.

"If we had a little white rattin' dawg," I said, "it wouldn't eat but rats and it could have a wee end offa my plate on the Sunday."

"Git over the bed," my gran'ma said, sharp, "and leave room for Harry, and stop up all this gabbin' and git to sleep."

"All right. Good night, Gran'ma."

"You never can tell," my gran'ma said at the door. "You might git a dawg someday, Dave. Now git to sleep."

I lay waitin' for Harry.

I could hear next door. I heard my grandaddy come in and grunt and I heard my gran'ma, her feet moved round the room, and then she spoke up to him.

"That dawg," she said. "The dawg that Davy wants."

I didn't ketch what my grandaddy said.

"You can't knock mansize sins outa boys that hasn't yit growed up to them," my gran'ma said. "Your own son's sons and you adenyin' them and drivin' them the same wrong road."

"It's God road," my grandaddy said.

"It's a fool's road, James Mackenzie," my gran'ma said, "and it ends in cryin'."

Harry came in then and there was no more talkin' save Harry. He had some gab and my gran'ma said yis and no, and Harry came to bed. It was dark and we couldn't see the picture, and Harry didn't want to talk. He said he was too damn bitter.

"If we *did* get a dawg," he said, "my grandaddy would only eat it."

I lay on my back for a long time. I heard my gran'ma and my grandaddy git into their bed and I jest lay on, thinkin'.

"Harry," I said. I kicked him. "Would he eat it skin an' all?"

"Eh?" Harry said, he was half asleep. "Eat what?"

"The dawg."

"I don't reckon my grandaddy is truly a dawg eater," Harry said. "Goodnight."

"You don't reckon he would truly eat a dawg?"

"Not a whole dawg," Harry said. "Now shet up and go to sleep."

"All right, Harry," I said. "Goodnight."

I don't know if it was the next day or some other day, I think it was some other day, the men came to our house. They came ridin' on hosses, and you could see crowds more where they came from. They was without hosses and small as worms way down in the valley. The hosses dug in their heels by our door and the men hollered for my grandaddy.

My gran'ma put her hand up atop her eyes and took a good hard look at them.

"Where's Jim Mackenzie?" they said. The hosses danced.

"He might be fixin' the fence," my gran'ma said at last. "Up by the oats."

"Gee-up!" they said. "G'an!" And I ran out from the side of my gran'ma to watch them go. It sure was pretty to see them hosses calomphin' along. Their hoofs hit sparks off the track and the men's backsides jogged up an' down.

"I reckon they came peaceable," my gran'ma said, "but it don't hurt to make sure. Davy, run down to the wood-pile and tell your grandaddy."

I told my grandaddy and he hit the axe blade into a hardwood log and started for home, and I ran beside him.

"There was guns stuck on the hosses' necks," I said.

My gran'ma had my grandaddy's boots open for him at the door. "There was five of them, Jim," my gran'ma said. "One was Joe Cullis."

"Was the hosses sweatin'?" my grandaddy asked.

"No."

My grandaddy laced his boots and took his gun off the top of the door. I ran to git his cartridge belt.

"Thanks Davy," he said.

We stood watchin' him till he hit the wood and we could not see him any more.

"Will my grandaddy be killin' the hosses too?" I asked.

"Your grandaddy's not agoin' to kill anything," my gran'ma said. "The idea!" But she stayed at the door, listenin', and I was not sure. "You bide by the house now," she said. She took a last hard listen and went in through the door.

Soon I saw Harry; it was his time to be home from school. I gave the scalp whoop and ran across the clearing to meet him.

"Five hosses," I said. "Guns. Guns, Harry, and men ridin' fast."

"That's nothing," Harry said.

"They went calomphin' up to the oats and my grandaddy's git after them. One of the hosses was white."

"Nothin'," Harry said. "Nothin'. Listen, where's grandaddy did you say?"

"He went after the hosses. The hosses was . . ."

"And gran'ma?"

"She's in. Harry, my grandaddy's booted up an' he's got his gun."

"Listen will you," Harry said. "This is *important*. I got somethin' mighty special. You know what I got. Go on, ask me?"

"What you got, Harry?" I asked.

"Not so loud," Harry said. "We'll jest ease down the hemlock way like we wasn't goin' nowhere in particler. Hisht now, I got somethin' you wouldn't guess. I got a babby."

"A babby!" I said. "A real babby?"

"Real enough," Harry said. "It's settin' in the hut chawin' away at a root. You feel the weight of it and you'd know it was real. I've had it since the mornin'."

"Where'd you git it, Harry?" I asked.

"Found it."

"And is it really ourn?"

"It's mine," Harry said. "But you kin have a loan of it when I got other business. We kin run now."

We ran.

"It's cryin' again," Harry said. "Hear it?"

I heard it plain.

Harry ran on in front, and when I got to the hut he had the babby up in his arms. "Hisht now," he was sayin'. "It had lost its root," he said to me. The babby was dressed in a shawl and long pink pants. Harry set it down and it rolled over and howled. Harry set it up straight and held out the root, and it took the root and shet up and shoved it in its mouth.

"Well doggone," I said. "It's purely real."

"You kin feel it," Harry said, "if you crave to," so I felt it. The babby did not turn its head to look, but its eyes came round the side of the root and gave me a glower.

"Hullo babby," I said.

It never said nothing.

"Kin it speak, Harry?"

"Ain't exactly gabby," Harry said.

"Is it new-born mebbe?"

"No, no, it's gittin' on. Listen Dave," Harry said, "you know what a babby needs best of all. It needs milk. So I aim to

go an' tap the goat afore my gran'ma gits there, an' you bide, see, an' mind the babby. If it drops its root it'll holler so give it its root back, an' if it still hollers sing to it."

"Okay Harry," I said.

When Harry was gone I sat down beside the babby and looked at it, and it looked back at me.

"What's your name, babby?" I asked.

It never said nothing.

I poked round it with my finger to see was it well fattened up, and it was. I stroked the top of its head and it never moved, only its eyes, they squinted up. It was jest a young babby and did not know it could not see the top of its own head. It sucked hard at its root.

"Tomorra babby," I said, "I'll cut you a hunk off the old hog. That's better nor root."

I thought I heard Harry, or mebbe it would be my grandaddy. I got a real skeer. I went out and poked my head round the side of the hut, and whenever I went away the babby let out a holler. "Wheesht!" I said. I could not see anything. I went back and said, "Wheesht now!" and when it saw me it stopped hollerin'. It had took a fancy to me. I went away some more times to see would it holler and every time I went away sure enough it hollered, and every time I went back it let off. I reckoned it was some birds I heard. I put my arms round the babby to lift. The babby was willin' but it was plumb solid. I got it up but my legs had no notion to walk with it. "See," I said, "you're big as me now." I heard a curlew whistle and knew it was Harry, so I put the babby down quick and set it right way up, and Harry came in then. He had a half tin of milk.

"Take the root out of its mouth," he said, "and let me feed it."

I took the root out of the babby's mouth and the babby hollered. It wouldn't look at Harry's tin. It was its root it wanted.

"All right, give it the root to have in its hand," Harry said. He had that babby all weighed off. I gave it the root in its hand and and it set right up and drank its milk, with Harry holdin' the tin and its face half inside of it.

I laughed to see it drink. "Sure has a thirst," I said.

"One thing about a babby," Harry said, "you got to wet its whistle near every hour of the day. My gran'ma near ketched me, Dave. I was jest finished at the goat when she came round the side of the house. Look now, you git up for your food; it's near your time, in case she starts searchin' for you. I gotta wash up the babby an' do its chores."

"And then you'll take it up to the house?" I asked.

"No no," Harry said. "I aim to keep it in the hut. There

ain't nobody but you and me got to know about this babby. It's ourn."

I thought about that. That was good.

"Are we goin' to keep it for ever, Harry?"

"I don't know," Harry said. "We'll keep it here for a year or two anyways till it's got a mind of its own, and then if it wants to hit the trail, won't be no stoppin' it. Now go on, Dave, up to the house."

I would a liked to bide and watch the babby git its wash, but I had to go for fear my gran'ma came down by the hemlocks, so I said goodnight to the babby and told it I would see it in the mornin', and went on up to the house.

The first thing I seen was my grandaddy's boots.

"Your grandaddy's at the water-shelf," my gran'ma said, "so say your prayers good."

I said my prayers and ate my food and drank the wee drop of milk that was all my gran'ma had gotten off the goat; then I said more good long prayers, then my grandaddy came in from the water-shelf and my gran'ma took me out and scrubbed my hands and face.

"Gran'ma," I said, "when I was a babby did I have a towel round my middle?"

"You did," my gran'ma said. "And all babbies has."

"Why?"

"Why?" my gran'ma said. "So as the babby is all plugged up of course. A babby is like a cat, you see. It has got to be teched about sich things, jest like a cat or any other young critter."

"But it's better nor a cat," I said. "Nor a dawg neither."

"Granted," my gran'ma said. "Now say goodnight to your grandaddy and git bedded."

I said goodnight to my grandaddy and got into the bed. I clean forgot about the hosses and the guns; I was too busy thinkin' about the babby, the games me and it would play, and what we was goin' to call it, that specially.

When Harry came in I asked him.

"I ain't jest settled on a name yet," Harry said, he whispered. "You thought up somethin'?"

"We could call it Rover," I said.

"No no."

"Rover's a good name, Harry," I said.

"Rover's a dawg's name," Harry said. "It's a good name for a dawg but not for a babby. I had a notion now to call it George."

"George is a good name too," I admitted, "but I like Rover best."

"I tell you 'tain't fitten," Harry said. "And whose babby is this babby anyroad?"

"It's your babby, Harry," I said.

"Well," Harry said, "I am goin' to call my babby George after the King, an' that is now its name, an' we will have no more argy-bargy outa you, Dave, that is if you crave to keep friendly with me and my babby."

"I think George is an extra good name, honest Harry," I said.

We heard my grandaddy say his prayers through the door, and then we heard the bed creak and we knew that him and her had gotten into it.

"Harry," I said, "how did you know about them wettin' cloths the babby has on round its middle?"

"I remember my mama with you," Harry said. "I used to help her and times I did you myself."

I thought about Harry doin' me. I couldn't remember, but Harry remembered near everything that ever happened from the start of him an' me. Harry remembered my daddy and my mama. He used to tell me pictures of them in bed, and my daddy was a big man in a white shirt, as strong and thick as my grandaddy but not so hairy and twice as clean, and my mama was purely beautiful with a soft way of strokin' you and you could tell her anything, and she did a lot of laughin' but never at you, and her face was like in a picture book. Not like my gran'ma who was kind but her face was strictly useful. I asked my gran'ma about my mama but my gran'ma never liked to look back, she only said, "Your mama was somethin' special even if she did marry our Alec. Remember always she was somethin' special, puir lassie; she had hands fine as a lady's."

"What are ladies' hands like, gran'ma?" I asked.

"Very clean," my gran'ma said.

I used to wash my hands sometimes when I was not told, because I wanted to be somethin' special too. I looked at my hands in the dark and I thought about the babby and the babby's hands. The babby's hands was fat and thick and dirty. "Did you wash the babby's hands, Harry?" I asked.

"Wheesht," Harry said. "Yis, I washed it all. I'm goin' now."

I must a been half asleep, lyin' there thinkin', because I saw that Harry was over by the window and he was dressed with all his clothes on. "I'll be back afore they git up in the mornin'," Harry said, and he climbed right out the windy.

I listened for a long time. I couldn't hear but my grandaddy snorin, and the birds, the noises they made in the wood. I wouldn't be surprised if I heard a wolf too. There was a terrible lot of noise in that old dark wood.

"George," I said. It was a good name right enough, but it wasn't sich a good name as Rover. I put my head under the blankets and went to sleep.

Next day my gran'ma and my grandaddy thought Harry was at school, but Harry was not at school. Harry was down at the hut with the babby and me. Harry was very sleepy on account of he had been too cold to sleep hardly all night and so he lay in the hut alongside the babby's nest and slept, and I had the babby to myself. I and the babby had a fine time. The babby had three teeth and a brown spot that wouldn't wash off under its chin. It could stand holdin' on but it didn't aim to stand on its own. I reckon it was a real lazy kind of babby. It was hard to please with its food too. It did not like salted ham and it even did not like a tasty hunk of cheese. It liked water and root, and it wanted to eat a stick of wood, but I did not let it until I had washed the stick good in the lake, and then I told the babby it was jest to suck.

When Harry waked up he sent me to the house for sweet taters, and I got that. Then he sent me to the house for a chunk off my gran'ma's bolt of cotton; that was for wettin' cloths for the babby. He said to wait till my gran'ma was out the back, then git the big shears and cut off a hunk this size. He showed me, but I could not work the shears. I got the beginnin' of a hole made, then my hand stuck in the handle of the shears and the blade of the shears stuck in the cloth and I thought I heard my gran'ma comin' and I picked up the whole bolt and shears an' all and ran. It was bigger'n me that cloth and it tripped my legs and I could not see where I was goin'; and it got real dirty and scratched with us fallin' and I lost the shears someplace and could not find them, but Harry said never mind. My gran'ma did not see me; nobody did, that was all that signified.

I had to go up to the house for my dinner, and I got some in my pockets for Harry and up my jersey too; my grandaddy was not there and I did not have to say long prayers, and when I got back, Harry had a fire built and the sweet taters was roastin' on the fire. We had ample food, but the babby was plumb finnicky and would not eat its tater, only a mite when it got cold, and a half slice of bread.

Harry watched the sun. He knew the size of the trees' shadders on the lake, and when they was the right size he said it was time for him to be outa school, and he better had go work a hand on that little old goat afore my gran'ma, she got there.

"Same as yestiddy, Dave," he said. "It's all yourn till I get back." He meant the babby.

I went and looked to see had he really gone, and then I came

back and pulled the babby outa its nest (the babby was hollerin'), and set it on my knee.

"Wheesht now, you're my babby now," I said, "Rover."

When Harry came back he was shakin' his head. Wasn't no milk but a little: it was a spoon's fill in the bottom of the tin. "Go up to the house, Dave," Harry said, "and git some pure water for mixin' in." The babby was smart. When it saw the tin it started yellin'. "Hurry Dave," Harry said, so I went runnin'.

I near run right into my grandaddy.

My grandaddy was standin' in the clearing and a big man along of him. That man was Mister McIver the preacher, and he was the dominie too. He was a true Christian like my grandaddy; he was fierce as a wolf, and his beard was red.

"You! Go git Harry," my grandaddy said, and his voice was small but bad.

I turned and ran back into the trees. I ran my fastest to the hut.

"Red Kiver, Harry!" I said. "Red Kiver the dominie! And my grandaddy wants you."

"Where?" Harry said. "Where, where, Dave?"

"In the clearing." I pointed.

Harry laid the babby in its nest and turned his eyes to Heaven.

"My grandaddy's hoppin' mad," I said, "On account of he must of got ketched with his boots not on. You better hurry."

"Lord sweet God, have mercy on me," Harry said. "A poor sinner."

I took his hand and we went up to the clearing.

"Come here," my grandaddy said. He pointed Harry with his beard. "Here." And Harry went and stood at the end of his beard. "Now," my grandaddy said, "you stand for judgment. Hev you aught to say?"

Harry shook his head, he did not look.

"The boy has sinned doubly. He has been absent two days," the dominie said, and he limbered his arm. "I maun thrash him, Jim."

"Aye," my grandaddy said, "you maun thrash him, John. This is fair an' fitten since you are his dominie, but you will thrash him in the school's time, I say, an' not in mine."

A glare got up between my grandaddy and the dominie; their eyes stuck out like the prongs of forks.

"I came as friend, Jim."

"You kin go as friend, John," my grandaddy said, "if you so please. You spoke as dominie. A man sends his childer to school, the dominie has the use of that childer in school-time. But when the school is out a man has the use of his own childer and his

childer's childer, and on my land an' in my time no man thrashes mine but me. Harry git to the woodshed. An' you, Dave, go up to the house."

I went to the house.

"I never called you yit," my gran'ma said. "What ails you?"

"Nothing," I said. I sat on my stool at the corner of the fire and wisht for a miracle to deliver Harry from the Christians. After a long time my grandaddy came stompin' in, I couldn't look.

"What was John McIver the preacher after?" my gran'ma said.

"It was John McIver the dominie," my grandaddy said. "He came by with a search party. They is searchin' the upper wood an' he stopped by to query for Harry. Harry has been absent the school two days syne."

My gran'ma opened her mouth and took that in. "And where is Harry?" she asked.

"In the woodshed."

"Hev you beat him?" my gran'ma said; her face was now shut up tight, and sour.

"No," my grandaddy said. "That is for the dominie. I have ast Harry where he has been and what he has been doin' but he does not aim to tell me. He defies me, an' so I hev shut him in the woodshed an' he will bide there until he sees the error of his ways. He will git no food but water. We will now pray."

After we had et, my gran'ma gave me a cat's lick at the water-shelf and sent me to my bed. I thought mebbe my grandaddy would go and git Harry, and my grandaddy did go to the woodshed but he came back single. My gran'ma spoke for Harry but my grandaddy hit the table a smack and said, "Silence! I have said he bides, woman. An' bide he will."

It was dark.

I put on my clothes and opened the windy enough to git through. There was more noises than any other night and the ground was a long way down from the windy and I could not see it. I did not want to go, but I knew somebody had to guard the babby from the wild beasts and give it its feed. I put my legs over and hung by my hands. I hung for a long time. After a bit I thought I would climb back in again, but I couldn't. I couldn't let go neither. If my grandaddy hadn't been there I'd have hollered for my gran'ma. I jest hung by my fingers till they bent up. Then I fell. I wasn't hurt except my fingers was sore and my knees was scraped.

It was awful dark.

If somebody got lost on a dark night like that they'd mebbe never git found for days and if they went down by the hemlocks

they might fall into the lake too. The beasts was prowlin' around the wood; you could hear them, and the birds was screamin' with fright.

I went to the woodshed and shouted, "Harry."

I gave a whole heap of kicks on the door and shouted, "Harry Harry Harry."

"Is that you, Dave?" Harry said.

"It's me," I said. "Harry, I'm not feart. Harry, mebbe I can't find the hut down by the hemlocks an'll fall into the lake. But I'm not feart, not of the wolves neither."

"I can't hear you," Harry said. "Dave, when you git down there give the babby its drink and change its wettin' cloth. Can you do that, Dave?"

I didn't know could I or not. I was watchin' a square-shaped beast the size of an ox; it was hidden in back of a bush.

"And then," Harry said, "see the babby is warm and tucked low in its nest and you can top it up with my gran'ma's cloth too."

"Harry," I said, "and I can't get back in the windy, it's too high. Harry, there's a great big beast out here glowerin' at me."

"There's what?"

"A great big beast," I said. "But I'm not feart."

"Stop screamin'," Harry said. "It don't do any good to scream."

"I'm not screamin'," I said. "I'm not feart, Harry, even if there's two of them. Harry, will it soon be light?"

"No, it won't be light for a long time," Harry said. "Dave, is there truly a beast? Are you awful feart?"

I could hear my heart, and my hair was hot.

"Are you, Dave?"

"Yes," I said. "And I'm feart of the wolves too, and mebbe I'll fall in the lake and I can't git back in the windy and could be I get lost in the wood and never was found again."

"Well shet up for a minute," Harry said, "and let me think."

I shet up. I never looked near the beast again, but it took a step nearer and breathed on the back of my neck.

"Harry," I said, "are you still there, thinkin'?"

"Yes," Harry said. "Listen Dave, there is only one thing to do. You are too little to do for the babby. Go on up to the house and tell my gran'ma. Tell her about the babby needs its milk. Go on now, run."

I couldn't run. I couldn't move.

"Go on," Harry said. "Dave, hev you gone?"

I heard the beast again and I let out a great loud scream. I guess mebbe I thought I would scare that beast away I jest stood with my eyes shut and the scream kept skirlin' outa me.

"Dave, is that you, Dave? Where are you?" my grandaddy's voice said, and I opened my eyes and saw his lantern.

"Tell my grandaddy!" Harry said. He was shoutin' and hammerin' on the inside of the shed. "That's grandaddy. Tell grandaddy!"

I ran like a tiger and took a leap at my grandaddy's legs.

"It's the babby," I said. "The babby, grandaddy!"

He picked me up level with his face and I told him. His face was lamp-lit and queer.

"In the hut by the hemlocks," I said.

"Show me," he said.

I took him down by the hemlocks. The beasts was fair feart of my grandaddy and was all runnin' far away. We heard the babby's holler and my grandaddy put his face to the sound and widened his legs and I had to run to keep up with him.

The babby was crinkled up and red with its holler but it let off when it saw the lantern. It was okay. I had to laugh, I was that pleased. "It's mine and Harry's, grandaddy," I told him. "Our babby."

My grandaddy dug his hand under the babby and lifted it, nest an' all, like in a shovel.

"And that's its milk," I said. "In the tin."

My grandaddy went out the door of the hut and up through the hemlocks towards the house. I was behind and I could not see. I kept fallin'. I ran fast as a hoss but there was little trees I could not see and I was scratched an' bleedin', and times I fell in the marsh, and I could not ketch my grandaddy.

"Grandaddy, what are you goin' to do with it?" I cried.

He never said nothing.

"Wait for me, grandaddy," I said.

But he never waited, no nor spoke.

I got feart all of a sudden. I was very very feart. "It's mine and Harry's," I shouted. "It's ourn!"

In the clearing I fell too, but I could run faster then and I ketched him up. I clawed at his leg but his leg was movin' and I fell.

"It's ourn," I said. "Ourn."

My grandaddy pushed open the door and went in the house and I fell on the step and was too tired and sad to git up. I jest lay screamin'. "Don't eat it, grandaddy," I said. "'Tain't fitten. Please, please don't eat it."

My gran'ma ran and picked me up and rocked me in her arms like I was a babby myself. "There ain't nobody goin' to eat it," she said, "or harm a hair of its mite head. Your grandaddy's goin' to give it back to its rightful owners, and that is all."

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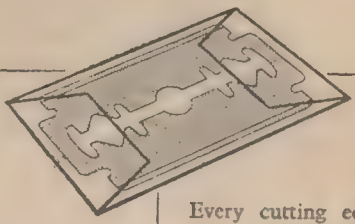

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"But it's ourn," I cried. "It's mine and Harry's!"

"Hush now," my gran'ma said, "it's the Donaldson babby, must be. It's been lost two days an' all the folks from the Houses searchin' for it an' its mama an' daddy near demented."

My grandaddy took the babby to the Houses, and that same night the men came for Harry. They came on hosses. They was hard-faced men and they stood in a crowd inside the door.

"It's the law," they said.

My gran'ma kissed Harry and buttoned his coat.

"You'll take good care o' him?" she asked.

"He won't come to no harm along of us, ma'am," they said. "The mob won't git him."

And then they set him on a hoss and took him away, and the next day but one they tried him.

The store was the Court. There was a big space in the middle of the store, and it was all filled up with folks settin' on benches; there must a been twenty there, and my grandaddy and me sat on the front bench. It was Mister Cameron's store, so it was Mister Cameron's court, Tom Cameron, and he sat on a high chair behind the counter, and a writer next to him. The writer was from up the river.

Harry had a chair to hisself.

A skinny man in black cloth got up on his feet. He was hairless and a stranger, and he began the gab.

"The case for the Crown," he said. "'Duction of young female." Sometimes he pointed at Harry. He spoke for a long time and folks humphed on their seats and scraped their boots; he spoke quiet and used long words; he was not worth listenin' to. "The Crown rests," he said, and sat down.

"Accused," Tom Cameron said.

Sam Howie, standin' back of Harry, poked him with his finger and Harry stood up.

"Harry Mackenzie, you got anythin' to say?" Tom Cameron said.

"The Lord have mercy on me," Harry said. "I am eight years old and a sinner, but I aimed at no harm."

"You understand," Tom Cameron said, "this is your defence. Is that all you got to say?"

"Yes mister," Harry said.

"Sir," the writer said. "You call the court sir."

"Yes mister," Harry said.

Sam Howie poked him with his finger again and Harry sat down. That was the best thing of all. That was right smart. Every time Sam Howie poked Harry he stood up, and if he was

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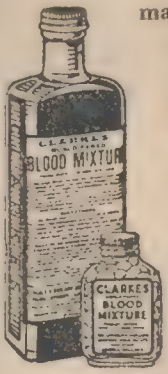

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standin' he sat down. I grinned to Harry but he was feart to smile back on account of my grandaddy. My grandaddy was settin' with his arms folded and his beard up. He never moved a half inch.

"Well then," Tom Cameron said, "this is how it looks to me. First, this female child has not come to a deal of harm. That's right Bill, isn't it? Where's Bill Donaldson?"

"I'm here," Bill Donaldson said, and he stood up. He was the babby's daddy. "Ain't harmed none far as me and my missus can see. Got to admit that."

"Well then," Tom Cameron said, "on the other side nobody can't deny there's been too much of this particular kind of lawlessness hereabouts. Take last month only. Willie Fleming's daughter. It was that trapper from your way, up the river, what was his name, Arch?"

"Foster," the writer said.

"That Foster," Tom Cameron said. "We all know what he did. He had Willie's Sarah off in the woods for twelve days afore the law caught up on him. Well then we made him marry her right here in this court and Sarah's got a man and tied up regler, and Willie's well pleased, admitted; still an' all, this abductions and crimes has got to cease."

"Sex crimes," the writer said.

"That's right," Tom Cameron said. "Sex crimes too. Our women rate high with us in this community and rightly; a woman's purity is a hangin' matter. It was time we showed the wild elements that this is so, and a man tampers with womenfolk gits his just deserts."

There was a kind of soft growl from most everybody and Tom Cameron nodded right and left and pointed to Harry. "Well then," he said, "we got here a boy who is guilty of the kidnap and abduction of this young female Margaret, daughter of Bill Donaldson. He says he aimed at no harm, and according to Bill he did no harm, but he admits to kidnap and that is a hangin' crime and has caused a deal of worry to Bill Donaldson and his missus."

"Darn right," Bill Donaldson said.

"Well now," Tom Cameron said, "we do not aim to be hangin' an eight year old boy, and the clerk says they will not take him upriver in the prison, but I hear there is schools for young uns where they can be teached to be reformed, and it is my opinion that we should conseeder the sendin' of Harry Mackenzie to one of them reform schools. Does happen anyone in the court knows aught of them schools?"

My grandaddy stood up and looked round the court, face to face. Nobody spoke, and then my grandaddy looked at Tom

Cameron. "If you send him to a school, Tom," my grandaddy said, "I'll shoot you."

"Sit down, Jim," Tom Cameron said, "and don't interfere with the course of justice."

"Contempt of court," the writer said.

"You shet up," my grandaddy said, "you scribblin' Pharisee. As for you, Tom, you know me well, an' you hev my meaning." And he sat down.

"Well now," Tom Cameron said, and he clucked in his throat and blinked like a little fat owl. "We was sayin'. I take it nobody here knows aught of them schools?"

"I could find out," the writer said.

"So you could," Tom said. "So you could. You will notice, Jim, that I did not say we was goin' to send the boy to a reform school. All I said was did anybody know aught of them schools so as the court could conseeder them. Well now it seems to me that the cause of justice would be served if the Clerk here was to find out all about them reform schools and then the court will have the information it needs and can send Harry Mackenzie to a reform school if it thinks fit the *next time* he appears on a similar charge. Case dismissed. That's all today, folks."

Sam Howie poked Harry with his finger and Harry stood up. "You're let off," Sam said.

Everybody got up, started movin' and speakin'. "Store's now open," Tom Cameron said, shoutin'. "Anybody aims to buy."

"Harry," my grandaddy said, "come here."

Harry came.

"Hullo Harry," I said.

He never spoke or looked at me. He was sickly white and his eyes was set low.

"Take Davy home," my grandaddy said. "Git straight home, the both of you, and you Harry set on your chair and wait there till I get home. Do you hear me?"

"Yis," Harry said; he whispered.

"Git movin' then," my grandaddy said.

Harry took my hand and we went home.

"You feelin' okay, Harry?" I asked.

"Yis," Harry said. "But there is an awful thing happened. Dave, you guess what's happened? My grandaddy got his boots on, and you know what is in the inside of them boots. It was the left boot."

I stared at him. I had clean forgot.

"The picture," Harry said. "The picture of the dawgs."

"Ah God," I said.

"So I will git two thrashings," Harry said. "Thrashed on

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account of the babby and thrashed on account of the picture."

"Mebbe I will git thrashed too," I said.

We went straight but slow.

"If he beats me till the blood comes," Harry said, "I am goin' to run away. Happen there is bits of my behind that I cannot see myself, so you will look for me, Dave, and if there is blood shows I will run away."

"I will run away too, Harry," I said.

"I am not goin' to stay and be beat to death," Harry said. "If he bloods me I will truly run away."

"Me too," I said.

I thought about runnin' away. I wondered where we would run to.

"Harry," I said. "That babby. It was a girl babby."

"Yis," Harry said. "Kin you walk faster, Dave?"

"Me? Easy," I said.

"Well," Harry said, "we better."

We walked fast. I thought of the places I knew. We could not run away to the Houses on account of we would only git ketched, and we could not run away to the woods on account of there was only beasts in the wood and there would be nobody to give us our meat.

"My gran'ma is makin' a pie," I said.

"What kind?" Harry asked.

"I forgit."

"Was it a berry pie?"

"I purely forgit," I said. "Harry, mebbe my gran'ma would run away with us too. That would be fine, wouldn't it, Harry?"

"No," Harry said. "She is on his side."

"My grandaddy spoke up for you in the court," I said. "He was on our side then, Harry."

"Yis of course," Harry said. "But that is with strangers. Him an' her is on the same side in the family. You tell my gran'ma a word of this about runnin' away and I will not take you with me. I mean that, Dave."

"All right," I said. But I felt sad. "I won't tell. I swear it, Harry."

We got to the house and went in.

"So you're home," my gran'ma said. "And hongry I'll be bound."

"No, I ain't hongry," Harry said.

"Ain't hongry!" my gran'ma said. "I never! Well I know somebody that is."

"Me neither," I said.

"I got a pie. Blueberry pie."

★ **Owing to the unprecedented number of entries for the Argosy Short Story Competition the Editor has not yet been able to make an announcement. The result will appear in the earliest possible issue of Argosy.**

" I ain't hongry, gran'ma," Harry said.

He sat down on his chair at the corner of the fire and I sat on my stool. My gran'ma stood starin'.

" We're waitin' for my grandaddy," I said. " My grandaddy said set and wait for him."

" Oh," my gran'ma said. She wiped her hands on her apron and shut her mouth up tight, and after a minute she turned to the skillet.

We waited a long time.

My gran'ma put the knives and tools on the table. " Even though you ain't hongry," she said, " you jest had better eat."

" Listen, there's my grandaddy ! " Harry said.

I listened.

" Hear him ? " Harry said. Harry was begun to shake, and me too, my knees was jiggin'.

My grandaddy opened the door and my gran'ma slammed the pie on the table. She stood and stared, jest stared.

" You did it then, you really did it ! " she said. I looked where she was lookin' and saw that my grandaddy was in his bare feet. " You walked through the Houses bare-fit, Jim ! "

" They are clean," my grandaddy said. " My good name is in God's hands and my pride does not rest in ornaments. Harry, git your gran'ma the quill and parchment."

Harry's hands was not trusty. He dropped the quill on the floor and I ran and picked it up.

" He will write it his own self," my gran'ma said ; she spoke firm. " Harry will."

My grandaddy did not argue.

" Sit down, Harry," my gran'ma said.

My grandaddy plucked a paper outa his pocket and laid it on the table. Harry began to cry. I never seen Harry cry in all my life before. I looked at the paper. It was the picture of the dawgs.

" Take up the quill an' write," my grandaddy said. " Write this, ' Sir I here enclose $26.50 for one red setter dawg and carriage of same stop in good condition and oblige.' Hev you writ that ? "

Harry shook his head.

" Well write it," my grandaddy said.

" And add this," my gran'ma said. " Yours in good faith." She was smilin' pretty as a young mama, and she spoke slow and

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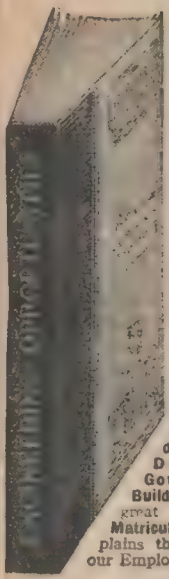

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proud. "Yours in good faith," she said. "James Mackenzie."

Harry wrote like fury; my grandaddy leaned over to see every scratch, and my gran'ma put her hand on my head.

"We're goin' to git a dawg," I said. "Are we, gran'ma?"

"Yis," she said, smilin'. "Yis Davy."

"I reckon we'll call it Rover," I said. "Eh Harry?"

Harry looked up for a minute and nodded, grinnin', and my grandaddy nodded too. "Rover's a right enough name," he said. I stood close up with my chin on the table, watchin'. I was mighty content, not only on account of the dawg but on account of I now knew ours was a good family, not like some. In our family we was all on the same side.

* * *

ANSWERS to THEY WERE ALL PRISONERS on page 58

1. *Edmond Dantes, in "The Count of Monte Cristo," by Alexandre Dumas.*
2. *Samuel Pickwick, in "Pickwick Papers," by Charles Dickens.*
3. *Peter Ibbetson, from the book "Peter Ibbetson," by George du Maurier.*
4. *Ernest Pontifex, in "The Way of All Flesh," by Samuel Butler.*
5. *Mrs. Rochester, in "Jane Eyre," by Charlotte Brontë.*
6. *Amber St. Clare, in "Forever Amber," by Kathleen Winsor.*
7. *The lover, in "To Althea from Prison," by Richard Lovelace.*
8. *Claudio, in "Measure for Measure," by William Shakespeare.*
9. *Lizzie, in "Goblin Market," by Christina Rossetti.*
10. *The Lady, in "The Statue and the Bust," by Robert Browning.*

* * *

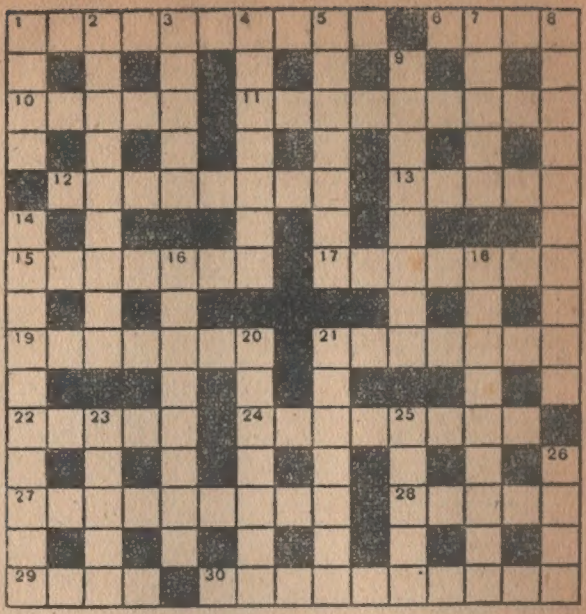
SOLUTION to ARGOSY CROSSWORD on page 128

Across. 1, Comprehend. 6, Pass. 10, Mania. 11, Lightship. 12, Boatrace. 13, Inner. 15, Pointed. 17, Sherbet. 19, Concert. 21, Cattaro. 22, Lagos. 24, Alarmist. 27, Theoretic. 28, Omaha. 29, Rank. 30, Brilliance.

Down. 1, Camp. 2, Mongolian. 3, Roast. 4, Holland. 5, Negress. 7, Ashen. 8, Separation. 9, Strident. 14, Speculator. 16, Treasure. 18, Boatswain. 20, Traitor. 21, Chancel. 23, Green. 25, Maori. 26, Race.

ARGOSY CROSS WORD

Solution on page 127



CLUES

Across

1 E m e n d porch (anag.) (10).

6 This port may not be shown on the coast necessarily (4).

10 There's no sense in this (5).

11 This vessel is apparently of no great displacement (9).

12 Serpentine vestige of famous contest (8).

13 A circle that is not coveted by those with ambitious aims (5).

15 The kind of remark that may penetrate (7).

17 Her best concoction (7).

19 In this naturally all is harmony (7).

21 Adriatic port (7).

22 W. African port (5).

24 He fears the worst and finally prevents clear vision (8).

27 The mineral discomfort is concerned with ideas only (9).

28 Town of U.S.A. (5).

29 A row (4).

30 It has a fishy start but may be dazzling (10).

Down

1 Concentration at start of campaign (4).

2 An Eastern (9).

3 By no means cooling advice (5).

4 In this country people are mostly on the level (7).

5 Certainly a brunette (7).

7 Pale as a bird (5).

8 This pairs a note but will never bring it together (anag.) (10),

9 The initial pace leads to a noisy result (8).

14 Spooner might have said his interest was in shocks and stares (10).

16 Something worth having (8).

18 The sailor the young lady on a cruise likes to find (9).

20 Many a one in history has travelled to France and back just to do his double-crossing (7).

21 Part of a church (7).

23 Colour (5).

25 Native representation of family alternative (5).

26 Part of 12 Across (4).

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If Back Aches Try This Quick Help

If you suffer from Backache, Rheumatic Pains, Aching Joints, Leg Pains, Sciatica, Disturbed Sleep and feel tired out, you may be delightfully surprised to find how quickly you can get back on the road to better health by simply helping your kidneys for a few days with Cystex. This scientifically compounded medicine is in pleasant, tasteless tablets. All you do is take two at mealtime. The very first dose usually goes right to work helping tone up kidneys and removing accumulated acids and poisonous wastes which may be the underlying cause of your trouble. Then you may be as pleased as Mrs. B., of Canvey, who writes: "I had not felt well for some time and suffered continually from Backache, but could find no lasting relief. Finally, I gave Cystex a trial. It has improved my health more in two or three days than other things have done for months." J.C., Liverpool: "I had suffered from Kidney Trouble for about 12 months which had caused me to feel very run down and depressed. I bought one bottle of Cystex and was amazed at the change in my health."

Get Cystex from your chemist to-day, price 1/5. This enables you to see how quickly Cystex gives relief. If difficult to get, send chemist's name to Knox Laboratories Ltd., 29 Duke St., London, S.W.1.

Ask your doctor about **Cystex**

I'm small and shy and frail,
but still
When I hop near a window-sill
I peep within, see creams and
scents
And Beauty's other ornaments!
Far more important, I should
think,
Her white teeth keep her
'in the pink'!
And she preserves their gleam
and gloss
By using stuff called Kolynos.
I'm just a Wren, without a tooth,
But 'little birds' oft tell the truth!

Confidentally it's KOLYNOS
FOR WHITER, BRIGHTER TEETH

50 Years of Pipe Contentment

ROYAL SEAL

2/8 PER OZ

A QUALITY TOBACCO FOR 50 YEARS